

ODST RED ALERT

by RCT DELTA 20

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Summary: HELLFIRE, an elite ODSF squad, are sent to retake an orbital elevator that has fallen into the hands of anti-UNSC terrorists. However, when their real enemy is revealed they must fight for survival and escape before it's too late. Dedicated to my clan.

1. Chapter 1

****ODST Red Alert ****

****Part 1****

Gun fire everywhere. Plasma scorched rubble. _Delta._ Elites, Grunts Jackals, Hunters everywhere. _Delta._ Comrades dead. Nowhere to hind. _Delta! _Inevitable death. _DELTA!_

Delta felt something hit him on the face, bringing him back to reality. He woke up to find that everyone else was already geared up for disembarking. "Who hit me?" he asked his squad.

"I did Lieutenant." The Captain told him. "The same nightmare?"

"Yeah, only this time it felt like they saw me and were preparing to attack." Delta said. "I can't believe my dad survived for that long."

It had been 5 months since the covenant was defeated and man-kind was concerned what other races would try and wipe them out with the Halo rings, so, the top scientists in the world were trying to re-open the portal that led to the Arc. Once there they would try to use what was left of it to find the other rings and destroy them. 1 man, Professor Crow, the head researcher on forerunner technology, had discovered something in some ruins near the crater that was New Mombasa. He took it into space to analyse it properly. 2 days ago the UNSC lost contact with him. The next day, the Orbital Elevator that he was

stationed at sent out a distress signal. So HELLFIRE was called in. It consisted of the best ODS'Ts the UNSC had, and now that Reach had been retaken, they had customized SPARTAN VI armours. In this detachment was the Captain, code named IRISH, the Lieutenant, code named DELTA, Spec Ops officer THEA, Weapon specialists, ASSRAK and Marco, also known as HUNTER, and the Medic, PASAGOA. Their numbers are always going but only a few of Hellfire was needed for this mission. Along with other high ranking ODS'T squads ALPHA, OMEGA and ECHO we were tasked with entering the Orbital Elevator, securing the Professor's research, and if possible the Professor himself and call for a pick up. However, ALPHA, OMEGA and ECHO had to make the station safe so upon landing, HELLFIRE would split up from them. Easy enough in theory but even the best laid plans could go wrong, and this was a perfect example.

As the airlock closed behind them, and the chamber had stabilized, that was when it hit them. "Awe, what is that stench?" Pasagoa asked.

"Yea, what died in here?" Thea exclaimed.

"Hay, do you want to jinx us?" someone from ALPHA asked.

"Right, pack it in, the lot of you!" Irish ordered. "Right ALPHA, OMEGA and ECHO, I want you to download the stations map from the terminals over there and head to the lower levels, try and see if you can find those damn terrorists. HELLFIRE, we are going to push to the Control room and set up a secure communications grid. We'll get our maps there, now move out!"

"SIR!" they all said in unison. HELLFIRE was the smallest squad out of the four on the station but that was because their job was the shortest and they worked better in smaller numbers...well, outside of a war anyway. They reached the door leading to the Control room but it was sealed tight. "Looks like someone wanted this to stay secure," Thea said, "I see no way to open it without a lot of explosives which we currently don't have."

"Hey, guys!" Delta called. "There's a service vent here. I'll see if I can get into it and open the door from the inside."

"Alright, but be careful. We don't want to lose you in there." Irish told him. After a couple of minutes later, the door started to open. However the scene that greeted them was horrific. There was blood everywhere, corpses in different positions, on the ground, hanging from the ceiling, some were even dismembered. "Sorry that took so long guys, but I think you'll forgive me." Delta explained.

"No need to explain Delta," Irish told him. "I probably would have had to close my eyes and do it. Right, let's get this com. grid up." After it was up, they restored the power to the rest of the facility, allowing the other squads to descend faster. Delta checked the last recorded surveillance footage, but all he saw was the station guards firing at someone, or something, heard them scream and then the camera went dead. "Which level was that on?" Irish asked him.

"B2."

"ALPHA come in this is Captain Irish. ALPHA come in!"

"This is ALPHA 01 what is it Irish?"

"Be warned we have reason to believe that hostiles are in your area and they may not be human, I repeat hostiles may be in your area and they may NOT be human."

"Thanks for the heads up, we'll..." he was interrupted by a defining roar. "What the! APLHA PULL BACK! I REPEAT PULL BACK!" Alpha 01 ordered over the gunfire.

"ALPHA 01 respond. ALPHA 01 please respond!" Irish ordered. All he heard was screaming and then the signal was lost. "We have to hurry up and find the Professor and get out of here." Irish said with a hint of panic in his voice.

"What did the Professor find down there?" Delta asked, now realising that their mission had just escalated. BIG time...

2. Chapter 2

ODST Red Alert

Part 2

Irish decided that whatever had attacked the station, it was definitely not a terrorist organisation. This new enemy posed a serious treat to the UNSC and had to be contained. Crow was reported to be on the higher levels and ALPHA was two levels below them. "Right. Delta, you take the squad and go find the Professor. I'll see if I can't link up with the survivors from ALPHA, OMEGA and ECHO. When I find them, I'll radio you. Got it?" Irish told him.

"You won't get to them in time." Delta told him. "Besides, one man against something that drove APLHA back isn't going to work, even if it is you. I'm coming with you."

"Delta, I wasn't asking you, it was an order. Find the Professor and call for extraction. I'll meet you at the evac. site _with_ ALPHA, OMEGA and ECHO."

"Irish, I grew up on this station. If you want to get to ALPHA while they're still alive, you need my help. Besides, how many times have I saved your life during the war?"

"Do you want it in Alphabetical or Chronological order? I guess you're right. Fine, Thea?"

"Yes sir?"

"Find the Professor and call for an extraction. We'll radio when we findâ€¦"

"ALPHA, OMEGA and ECHO, I get it." Thea interrupted. "Right, come on guys, lets leave the big boys to there business." He then led Assrak, Marco and Pasagoa to the elevator shaft.

"Thea!" Delta called.

"Yeah?"

"Use the stairs, the power may go out again."

"Rodger that." He then started to climb the stairs. There was a power surge and the lights flickered off. After a second they came back on but the other members of HELLFIRE were already out of sight.

"It's strange," Irish said. "Twelve years as an ODS and I never felt like this before."

"Like what? Don't tell me you getting all emotional on me?" Delta asked him.

"It's not that, I fell like I won't see them again."

"Don't worry." Delta told him as he put his hand onto Irish's armoured shoulder. "It's not out time to die." He slowly turned towards the staircase leading to the lower levels and cocked his Battle Rifle. "Not yet anyway."

As they descended to the lower levels, the lights kept getting dimmer and dimmer. Soon they had to activate their VISR systems.

"It's strange, there doesn't seem to be any sign of battle," Delta said, "yet the control room was covered in blood. I don't like this Irish; I don't like this at all."

"According to the map we should be right above where we lost ALPHA's signal. The hostile forces may not have made it up this far. The security door should be just up ahead." Irish told him.

When they reached the security door, it was already open. "ALPHA should have closed this," Delta said, "which means that the hostiles must have opened it. Be cautious." There was a window looking out into space near the door. A shadow then passed over the window. "What was that?"

"What was what?" Irish asked.

"Over by the window."

"Don't know, but we'd better check it out." The two of them moved towards the window. Below them was a part of Europe that the station was orbiting over, near Britain. The planet looked so peaceful from space, but, then again, it always did. Something then hit the window. When Irish shone a flashlight at it, it was a human corpse, floating in space. Not just one, but what seemed like a good hundred. One of the closest that they could make out, was the body of ALPHA 01. He had lost most of the left hand side of his body. "There must be a breach in the lower levels." Irish said. "Still, that is no way to die."

"What could do something like that?"

"I think we're about to find out. Look at the radar."

Irish was right. On the radar were two yellow dots. That represented Delta and Irish. Hostiles appeared as red dots. The radar was filling up with red dots. Then there was an ear piercing screech coming

from the security door.

"Delta, get that door closed NOW!" Irish shouted as he brought his Assault Rifle to bear on the incoming targets. Delta rushed to the control panel and input the close command. He then helped Irish fend off the enemies until the door had closed. There was then a skittering sound coming from above.

"Perimeter breach, we have a breach!" Delta screamed as he and Irish emptied magazines at the targets on the ceiling. Some fell to the ground and started to attack. Irish drew his energy sword and engaged the enemies in melee combat. Delta was still firing at the ceiling when he got a visual on one of the targets. "What the hell, Irish, they're zombies! There bloody ZOMBIES!" Delta screamed at Irish.

"I know! DELTA BEHIND YOU!" Irish screamed. Delta turned to see one of the zombies charging at him. The zombie tackled him and they fell through an open elevator shaft. As Delta started to plummet all he could hear was Irish shouting his name.

3. Chapter 3

ODST Red Alert

Part 3

As Thea and the rest of HELLFIRE ascended towards the Professor's location, the power went out and an elevator zoomed passed them and crashed a few seconds later. "Wow, imagine that." Pasagoa said. "Guess that the Lieutenant was right about taking the stairs."

"Yea, I'll be sure to congratulate him when we next see him." Thea said.

"Shh." Assrak told them. "Do you hear that?" There was a faint sound coming from the room on the left. It sounded like crying. Instinctively, they all stacked the door while Assrak punched in the code to open the door. When the door opened the lot of them ran in with their guns raised only to be met with startled screams and more crying civilians. "It's okay; we're not going to hurt you. We're just looking for Professor Crow, have you seen him?" Thea asked.

"You're too late." a Guards said. "Professor Crow left a few hours ago to try and find any more survivors on the lower levels."

"Well if he is on the lower levels, Irish or Delta must have found him by now." Assrak said.

"I'm afraid not." A voice said from the door way. They all turned round, guns raised at the doorway. At the doorway, stood Irish. "We didn't find him and the door to the lower levels has been sealed. There is no-way that I'm letting those things get up here."

"What things?" Thea asked.

"Sir, where's Delta?" Assrak said.

Delta awoke to the sight of a thousand foot drop. The only reason why he hadn't fallen was because he had become tangled in the elevator

cables that had fallen across the shaft. He had only been out for a few minutes but he needed to get untangled so he began to cut away at the cables with his combat knife. Suddenly the power went out. He heard something coming down the shaft from above. He turned his head to see what it was. It was an elevator car. "Oh my lord, God almighty!" He said as he started to cut furiously at the cables. The car kept on coming and it didn't look like he would clear before it hit him. All of a sudden, some of the cables snapped and he was swung to an open elevator door. He got up to see the elevator zoom past him. "That was way to close." he said. He looked around but the level he was on was encased in darkness. He saw a light a few feet ahead of him so he started to walk towards it. It was a slightly open door. The power was out in that section but there was light coming from the sun so he was able to see where he was going. He walked through the door that said, WELCOME TO, the rest of the sign was unreadable. He entered the room, only to find that the floor was covered in corpses, some human, others less so. He looked at one of the bodies of the enemy that he had classified as zombies. They looked human enough, they had the same face, legs, feet, but the shoulders were hunched up so much that the neck had disappeared. As if the head was attached to the shoulders only. Some had human looking arms; others had what resembled the arms of humans infected by the flood. "What the hell? I thought the flood was eradicated from Earth?" He dropped the body and went over to the other human looking corpses. He found a Magnum, a few grenades and an assault rifle. He turned the light on the assault rifle. He heard something coming from the entrance door. He turned around but saw nothing. Instead he saw the sign; WELCOME TO, and written on the wall in blood, HELL. "Wow, that's...fitting? I have to regroup with everyone else and get off this station." He decided that he should continue down the lit passage to try and find a way back up to the upper levels. He heard a scream and rushed to the end of the corridor to try and find the source. He rounded the corner to see a mother, child and security guard against a couple of zombies. He raised his assault rifle to bear on the nearest zombie. He fired and it was over in a matter of seconds. The mother and child got up, thanked him, then ran off through a door. "Thanks buddy." The guard said as he walked over to Delta. "Who knows what may have happened if you hadn't come along. You're an ODST aren't you?"

"Lieutenant Delta of HELLFIRE at your service. Do you have anywhere safe that you can go?"

"Yea, there's a safe room near here. That's where we were headin'. Come on, I'll show you." The guard said as he walked off towards the same door that the other two had went through. Delta followed him until he fell over his ankle.

"You okay?" Delta asked him.

"Guess that zombie filth got me worse then me first though." The guard said through his teeth. Delta helped him up and supported him as they passed through a series of bends and passage ways until they arrived at a door. The guard knocked it and a pair of eyes appeared through a slit in the door. The eyes disappeared and the door opened. There stood a muscular man holding what looked like a broken off machine gun turret. He hurried them in, shut the door and helped the guard towards a seat.

"Thanks trooper, we'll take it from here. You may want to speak to the Professor before you do anything else. He's in that room over

there." He said as he helped the guard over towards a chair. There were around twenty plus people in the main room, most civilians, but there were a couple of elevator security guards and a few UNSC soldiers. As he walked to the room, the soldiers got up to salute him. He returned the salute and walked into the professor's room.

"Professor Crow I presume?" he said as he walked in. There were a few shapes standing around a table, and they all moved to look at him. Most of the shapes were the officers from OMEGA, ECHO and, what was left of it any way, ALPHA. But among all the men was a woman who Delta remembered from childhood as Kairi Knight. "Kiara? Is that you?"

"I'm sorry, but I not good with faces when they have a helmet on." She said.

"Oh, sorry." Delta replied as he took off his helmet.

"Andrew, is that you?" she asked.

"You know the Lieutenant?" asked one of the men from OMEGA.

"Know him? I've known him since we were kids and, after all, he's my boy-friend." She said.

4. Chapter 4

ODST Red Alert

Part 4

The other ODSTs were speechless, then began to laugh. "What's so funny?" Kiara asked then.

"Sorry. It's just the way you said it." OMEGA's Sergeant said.

"I still don't see how that's funny?"

"You haven't changed, have you Kiara?" Delta said.

"Well, I can't say the same about you. Last time I saw you, you were a Corporal." Kiara said. "How's Nick?"

Delta lowered his head. "He's dead." He finally said, "He died trying to save me and my squad." A tear formed in his eye.

"Andrew, I'm so sorry." Kiara said as she came over to comfort him.

"Its okay, what's in the past can't be changed so I get use to his absence. He died an honourable death."

"Yeah, and at least he took out a lot of those covenant scum bags in the process." OMAGA's Sergeant added.

"Anyway, I'm not here to reminisce about the past. I'm here to see Professor Crow. Where is he?" Delta said.

"Over here." Called the Professor as he wheeled himself over to the table in his wheelchair. One of his legs was missing and the other wasn't in any better shape.

"What happened to you?" Delta asked?"

"Those damn zombies got him good." Someone from ALPHA said.

"Please, do you have to use that vulgar term," the professor corrected. "You know that I have designated them as the Falling."

"Why the Falling?" Delta asked.

"It was the name that appeared on my computer terminal before they attacked us." Professor Crow explained. He showed Delta the message that he had copied to his laptop. It said:

THE FALLING WILL RISE AGAIN.

"So, those zombie things are the falling and we have to stop them?" Delta asked.

"Basically, yes." Kiara said bluntly. "However, the Professorâ€¦"

"I want you ODS'T's to go out there and find me some specimens." Professor Crow interrupted. "Only with those specimens can I find a way to stop them."

"You want us to risk our lives for something that could kill everyone here if it got loose?" ECHO's Lance Corporal said.

"What about dead bodies?" asked Delta.

"That wouldn't work well because the mind link would be severed." The Professor said. "We need it intact in order to find a way to use it to our advantage." The power came back on and the lights scattered throughout the room flickered on.

"That isn't going to be easy," Delta said, "But I'll try my best to bring one back alive." Delta said as he put his helmet back on and left the room to get some volunteers.

"There, power re-boot in a few seconds." Thea said as he walked away from the terminal.

"Good, call for extraction for the civilians. Once that's done we'll look for Delta." Irish said.

"You think that he's still alive?" Assrak asked.

"You know as well as I do that it's going to take a lot more than a 10,000 foot drop to kill him." Irish said. "Hell, not even the Covenant could kill him. Besides, I'm tired of him saving me. It's time I returned the favour." Irish said before he addressed the crowd of people.

"I think leaving Delta was very hard on him." Marco said. "I've never seen him so determined before."

"Right, Marco, I want you to stay with the civilians while they wait for the extraction. When it comes go with them and try and get us some reinforcements." Irish said.

"Sir!" Marco replied.

"Right, HELLFIRE with me!" Irish order as he raced out the door towards the elevator shaft nearby. The doors were closed so he had to pry them open.

"Don't tell me that you are planning on dropping down to the lower levels?" Pasagoa said.

"No. I was going to use the service ladder right here." Irish said pointing at the ladder below him.

"Ohâ€|" Pasagoa muttered.

Irish started to descend the ladder. "Hold on Delta. The cavalry is on its way."

5. Chapter 5

ODST Red Alert

Part 5

Irish pried the elevator door open so they could all get out of the shaft.

"The power still isn't on in this sector." Irish said looking at the closed security door. "Thea, see if you can do something about this."

"I'll see what I can do." He said as he briskly walked off towards a nearby terminal.

"This is 12 levels from where Delta fell." Assrak said. "You think that he could be on this level?"

"This is the only level that has any significant life readings on it." Irish said. "If he is still alive, he'll be here."

"Besides, our objective is to find the Professor." Pasagoa said. "If Delta's still alive he'll find a way off this thing, he IS an ODST after all."

"Delta is still a priority." Irish said. "We can collect the Professor's data if he's dead. Delta's skills can't be collected."

"You never told us where you found him sir." Assrak said.

Irish looked at Thea. "Are you going to be long Corporal?"

"Most likely." Thea said. "There seems to be something blocking the power flow to the lower sectors. I'll see if I can't dislodge it."

"Well, since we have time," Irish said as he took off his helmet, "I guess I should tell you about the Lieutenant." Irish's face was of a somewhat round build. His nose slightly bent at the bridge, suggesting a broken nose. His eyes weren't visible in the lower level light but it was as plain as day how many scars he had on his face, all scattered around his features, under his eye, across his lips and a massive scar raging from the top of his forehead to the bottom of his chin. "I found him during the last battle for Darla. He was a Corporal back then, in the UNSC. His squad had been all but wiped out. I was serving with his father, Lieutenant Nightstalker, back when I was a Sergeant. Our mission was to find missing ONI officers and get them to the _Infinity_. When he saw Delta and his squad being overwhelmed, he ordered our Pelican to lower and extract them. The pilot said that he already had his orders and landing wasn't part of it. He wouldn't take no as an answer. He opened the rear hatch and rappelled down to the ground. He was an ONI officer himself so the Pelican had to pick him up. I was the first person off the Pelican to support him. He was barking orders at the UNSC soldiers to board the Pelican. Delta was the only person who disobeyed that order. The Pelican was soon full and had to take off, leaving me, Delta, a few other ODSTs and the Lieutenant. We had to wait for another Pelican that was on-route with other evacuees. I was surprised to see how many Covenant died by Delta's hands. He was amazing. You all know what he's in a battle, he's near unstoppable. The Covenant just kept on coming, growing bigger and bigger in number but we still didn't take a hit. We were afraid that, because of the amount of Covenant around the L.Z, the Pelican would have to divert to a different L.Z or even leave us and evacuate the civilians. Thankfully, the pilot tried to pick us up but the fire coming from the enemy positions forced him to land further behind us. We had 2 options. Stay and fight to the death, or make a break for the Pelican and get to the _Infinity_. The Lieutenant said that he would stay to buy us time. Delta was very stubborn back thenâ€¦"

"He still is sir!" Pasagoa said jokingly.

"You've got a point. As I was saying, he was determined to stay with him. I don't know what he said but the Lieutenant was able to convince him to go. He handed him something before we left. We bolted for the Pelican with the constant fear that the Covenant were right behind us. Finally we reached the Pelican and took off. We passed over the trenches to find that the Lieutenant was still alive. He was using an energy sword to cut away at the Covenant forces. He fell to the blade of, what looked like, the current Arbiter. But not before dealing the killing blow to the Arbiter himself. After that, Delta became an ODST and joined my squad."

"That still doesn't explain why he has such good skills." Assrak said.

"The reason why he fights like that isâ€¦" Irish paused.

"Is what?" Thea asked worriedly.

"The reason why he fights like that is becauseâ€¦he's a Shadow Soldier. They were the UNSC's secret and main force of Supper Soldiers before the SPARTAN program was initiated." He stood to replace his helmet. "He is the last of the Shadow Soldier program."

6. Chapter 6

ODST Red Alert

Part 6

Delta was able to convince a group of people to help him get a live Falling. It consisted of 7 UNSC soldiers, 2 ODSTs and Gustew, the door man. Before they were about to leave, Kiara called for Delta. When he went to see her, she was holding something covered by a long, dark cloth. "You gave this to me the day you went with Irish to become an ODST." She said as she removed the cloth. It revealed a sheathed Katana. "I think it was time I gave it back to you." Delta took the sword and grasped the familiar hilt with both hands.

"I remember this." Delta said. "My Grandfather gave it to me when I was 4 years old and asked me to look after it for him until he came back." _Though he never did_, he thought to himself. _That's why they say this sword is cursed. Whenever someone gives it to someone close to them to "look after" while they go into battle, they never return._

"That's what you asked me to do remember?"

"Yea, I remember_." I didn't think I would survive the war but I wanted to be remembered_. "I just can't believe you still have this."

"I never leave it out of my sight." She said with a blush.

Delta turned to stare at her. "You never let it out of your sight. How many heads did you turn with this?" he said as he put his finger along the blade's edge.

"I never went out. Everything I needed was brought to me." Delta's finger, even though he was wearing gloves, caught on the blade and started to bleed. "I was too busy keeping it in its best condition. I knew you would come back to me, I just wasn't sure when so I wanted it to be ready for you when you did come home."

She really thought I would return alive? Well I guess the so called curse was a myth. "Thank you, this will come in handy sooner or later." He said as he strapped the massive sword to his back. He turned and left with the others.

"The Shadow Soldier program?" Assrak asked, looking a little confused with his helmet off. He joined the UNSC just before the war ended and was relatively new to the squad so didn't have that many facial injuries to account for. "Never heard of them."

"And so you shouldn't have. I only know about it because Delta told me himself." Irish said. "Most high ranking ONI officers don't even know about it. It was filed above TOP SECRET."

"How did it differ from the SPARTAN program then?" Pasagoa asked.

"They're practically the same." Irish explained. "The only difference is that SPARTANS were kidnapped as children but Shadow Soldiers were

given a choice. They were chosen 1 out of every 10 recruited soldiers. They were asked if they wanted to join the program. If they declined, they went back to the normal military. If they agreed, they were taken to Darla and trained to be the best. The instructors for both the Shadow Soldiers and the SPARTAN program were the same and they used the same chemicals to improve their bodies."

"Well, it sounds like being a Shadow Soldier was better than being a Spartan." Thea said from the terminal. "So why did the Shadow Soldier program fail?"

"It's all about timing." Irish told them. "The Spartans were given these chemicals as children, their DNA allowed the chemicals to be accepted, however, the Shadow Soldiers were grown men and so their DNA became hostile towards the chemicals. They still worked but after a while, ever the chemicals are expelled from the body or the soldier has an in-volatile spasm, which will break their spine and result in death. The Spartans were safer Super Soldiers so the Shadow Soldier program was ended. The remaining soldiers rejoined the regular military and died in battle."

"Why's Delta still alive then?" Pasagoa asked.

"He had some form of mutation in his DNA and the chemicals were accepted. No-one knows about this apart from me, Delta and you lot."

"I take it he was part of a Delta squad then?" Thea asked.

"Actually," Irish waned, "more like the Delta batch."

"Got it!" Thea shorted as he hit a button on the terminal. Nothing happened.

"Got what?" Pasagoa asked.

"Oh..." Thea trailed off. "Looks like I can't get the power on in this sector. Fear not, I can still get the emergency clamps off the security door...we'll just have to pry it open."

"WHAT!" Assrak shouted. "I became an ODST to kill things, not to do manual labour!"

"It's this, or we give up and go back to Hunt..." Thea was cut off by the elevator door slamming shut.

"Guess we don't have a choice now." Irish said as he tried to open the door. It weighted a ton so he had to get everyone else to help him, and they were only able to get it open enough for one person to go through at a time. Irish was the first through. It was pitch black so he turned on his flash light. He was met with the sight of hundreds of bloodied corpses scattered around the passage way. "They're close." Irish said to himself. "Very close."

7. Chapter 7

****ODST RED ALERT****

****Part 7****

"This big enough for you doc?" one of the UNSC soldiers said sarcastically as a bond up Falling was dropped onto the table. It was unconscious so the Professor could examine it safely.

"Oh my..." he said, "It's beautiful!" He hurriedly wheeled himself over towards the table to get a better look at it.

"You think this is beautiful?" asked ALPHA 07 pointing his finger into the creatures face.

The professor shoed his finger away and started his examination. He started to poke and prod at the inanimate body and told everyone in the room to leave and to give him space to conduct his research. Outside the room Delta had a chance to fully examine the people who were in the safe room. Most didn't have any marks on them, while some had gashes on different parts of their bodies. One person was missing an arm, another a leg. "Are there any more saferooms around?" Delta asked one of the security guards.

He took Delta over towards a terminal and brought up the station map. "There are a few safe rooms up here," he pointed at the top half of the map, "and around 50 down here on the lower levels."

"Can we contact the other safe rooms?" he asked.

"We did have a radio working," he said pointing at the corner of the room, "but it doesn't work anymore. Besides, when it died we had learnt that most of the safe room doors were down and the occupants were dead."

"Do you think I could have the radio?" Delta asked.

"If you can get it to work, it's all yours." Delta walked over to where the radio was and examined it. It was a retro 2001 two way radio but it was in a pretty good condition. He pried the back off and started to tinker with the insides, like an experienced doctor does a patient's organs. After a quick check of the systems he concluded that the only think that didn't work was the receiver node. "I'm not going to get any use out of..." he said before pulling off his helmet. It had a built in radio and the receiver node still worked. He ribbed it out and slotted it into the radio. When he hit the power button, he was met with the sound of gunfire.

"_This is saferoom 562, we need immediate assistance." _There was a loud bang that sounded like metal being pounded. _"They are almost through. Please, if anyone can hear this, HELP US!" _the voice said over the sound of constant banging. Delta looked around the room and was met by everyone else's eyes. They were listening to a distress signal, no, a desperate plea for help and he couldn't do anything about it. There was an all mighty thump that came through the radio. The falling had breached the saferoom door. It was followed by, screeching, gunfire and screams of the saferoom occupants. Delta turned the radio off. There were a few whimpers from the other people in the saferoom. Delta felt someone touch his shoulder. He turned to see who it was. Gustew stood over him. "There was nothing you could have done." he said and he walked back to his position at the door. Delta turned the radio back on at a low volume to check if it was over. It was. He said a small prayer for those who had died before

cycling through the channels to see if anyone else was still alive. He finally found a channel that wasn't full of static. He spoke into the radio. "Is anyone there?" There was silence but before the change the channel he heard a noise. Then a voice.

"_Somebody else, alive?" _it said. _"Guys, we have other survivors!"_ There was, what sounded like, a cheer in the background. _"Glad to hear that there is somebody else out there is still alive. Do you lot need rescuing? We were about to go out and get the guys from room 562."_

"I wouldn't bother." Delta said.

"_Why?" _asked the voice.

"We just heard their last words before the Falling got them." He replied with a shaky voice. There was silence on the other end of the line.

"_Guess we're next them."_ The voice finally said.

"What do you mean?"

"_We're room 565, just up the hall from 562."_Delta's heart sank._ "Don't worry. If they do get through our barricaded door, we'll take a few of...what did you call them, Falling, with us. We're right next to the armoury. We'll give them hell before we go ourselves."_

"The armoury?" Delta said. He glanced at the station terminal map. There was a vent leading from his saferoom towards the armoury. "Just stay where you are. Barricade the door even more if you can. I will get you out of there."

"_What? How?"_

"There's a vent leading from my saferoom here to the armoury. If I can get to you via the vents, you can get here the same way."

"_That vent door is sealed shut. There's no way for us to get up into it!"_

"Then stay where you are and I'll come to you and guide you up to here."

"_OK, but hurry!"_

Delta turned to find people asking him if they could help. He choose the UNSC marines and a couple of ODSTs. The rest would stay and protect the saferoom. Delta opened the vent and climbed up into it. He, along with everyone else who was with him, crawled towards saferoom 565. "I will not feel helpless ever again." he said to himself.

8. Chapter 8

ODST RED ALERT

Part 8

The vent was very cramped as the rescue party moved towards the armoury but they all moved as quickly as they could. They estimated that they had 10 minutes to get to the survivors before the Falling broke through the door. Good thing they were 5 minutes away from them. The same thing kept going through Delta's mind; I will not feel helpless ever again. As they neared the Armoury they heard the sound of people talking and the constant banging off metal.

"Keep that door closed. We have to hold out and wait for that guy on the radio to get here."

Delta recognised the voice. It was the man from the radio. He found the vent entrance into the armoury and began to kick at it. Even though he was putting a massive armoured boot against something that looked very flimsy, it would not budge. He grabbed his sword and rammed it into the edge of the grating. He pushed the sword down and it fell away. As he lowered himself down, he knew they would have to find a ladder or something to get back into the vent. He hit the floor with an almighty crash, startling the survivors. One of them let off a round of bullets at him, forcing him to find cover.

"HOLD YOUR FIRE!" Delta barked. The rain of bullets stopped and Delta emerged to see who had fired at him. His assailant was a blond girl, about 5 feet, and was around 16 years old.

"Sorry." She said. "I thought you were one of them."

"Are you that guy who said was coming for us on the radio?"

Delta stood and saluted. "Lieutenant Delta of ODST HELLFIRE, at your service."

"An ODST?" someone said from the crowd of survivors.

"Actually, more like 7 ODSTs." Delta told them as the other ODSTs dropped to the floor. "Now, lets get you all out of here."

Irish took point as they all moved along the passage way towards the main floor. The power was still off but the smaller doors were a lot easier to open than the last security door. Eventually they emerged into floor 50, the exact same level that all significant life form readings were on. "Right, before we can search for Delta, we need to get the power back on soâ€¦|Thea, do you think you can get the power flowing back into the station?"

"Sure." Thea replied. "But we'll need to go to the main generator in order for me to have any chance." There was an eerie screech coming from further on down the corridor, followed by a rhythmic thump, thump of metal being pounded.

"Must be those zombie things we saw earlier." Assrak commented.

"Down that way's the only way to the generator." Thea said.

"Well, let's get going." Irish said. "So many zombies to kill, so little time to do it."

One of the survivors found a ladder, allowing Delta to speed up the evacuation but it was still going too slowly. It would take them

another good 5 minutes to get them all back into the vent and to seal it up so that the Falling couldn't follow them. The door would be breached in about 2, so Delta decided to set up defences aimed at the door. Each defence station would fire only if a certain point in the door and barricade was compromised to limit the damage dealt to the remaining part of the door. This would also allow the remaining soldiers and survivor volunteers, to carry what armaments they could back to the other safe room, as well as preparing the charges to blow the shaft. Delta put ALPHA 06 in charge of the evacuation while he led the defensive line forces.

"Are you sure about this?" one of the UNSC soldiers asked.

"You can go on back with them if you want." Delta said as he fed the ammo into one of the machine gun turrets.

"No, it's just that I..."

"It's okay, I understand how you feel about fighting these things, but don't you worry about them. They are easy enough to kill."

There was a loud bang as part of the barricade fell in.

"ALPHA 06, get those people out of here NOW!" Delta barked as he ran to his position. He was at the back of the defence line and felt like a hulk compared to all the other soldiers that were with him because of his SPARTAN II armour.

"We already have most of them away, but we're still planting the charges." ALPHA 06 replied.

"Well, hurry it up then!" Another bang, only this time part of the door was exposed but not enough for his men to start firing. The next hit on the door did the same thing. At this rate the door would cave in and Delta's strategy would fail. "When I give the word, open fire on the door." Delta turned to see ALPHA 06 priming his last explosive charge. He turned and gave Delta the thumbs up before ascending back into the vent. Then it hit Delta. They weren't going to survive the attack. There would be no way for them to safely get back into the vent. "All units fall back to the other safe room."

"What?"

"If you stay, you will die, now move it!" Even though some protested, they all eventually decided to return to the vent. By this time, ALPHA 06 should have been half way back to the saferoom. Delta drew his sword and took a stance, ready for the Falling to enter. With a few more pounds on the door, it caved in and the Falling poured into the room. Before Delta could think, he had already decapitated an approaching Falling. He swung and swung but still they kept coming. Suddenly, a voice sounded on his radio. It was ALPHA 06. "I'm sorry Delta, but I can't risk them coming through the vent. I'm so sorry. I'll tell Kiara that you died to save us all." Delta heard beeping coming from the vent. He turned to warn his men but by the time he got a word out, the vent collapsed from the explosion, but there was still more beeping...coming from around the room. Delta hadn't noticed the charges being set and now it was too late. They detonated, killing most of the Falling with them, but these were relatively small charges. Then Delta knew why they weren't large ones. They were placed in strategic areas to bring the roof down. The

last thing Delta saw was the floor above him, a salon he guessed, raining down on him. "Guess this sword really is cursed." Delta said as he was sent to the floor by the falling rubble. Then, he blacked out...

9. Chapter 9

ODST RED ALERT

Part 9

Kiara helped the survivors out of the vent and treated those with major injuries, even though the worst she saw was a broken leg. While she was treating a burn on a 17 year old girl, the room started to shake and a massive explosion echoed around the room. Then the rescue party clambered out of the vent. Kiara was shocked to see that only half of the rescue party had returned. She found ALPHA 06 and asked him where everyone else was.

"The Lieutenant led a group to buy the survivors' time to escape. While they were getting into the vent, my team started to put charges all around the room and in the armoury. When we were done, we began to pull out and I gave him the detonator. He told me that he would be right behind us so I entered the vent. Then I heard the door cave in and I looked to see how far he was behind me. As I turned, the charges went off and the vent collapsed. I was just able to get to a safe part in the vent. I heard the screams of those who stayed behind as they were massacred by the Falling. I am so sorry but..." ALPHA 06 stopped because he could see that the news was very distressing for Kiara.

"Please, I have to know." She asked him.

"Lieutenant H02, DELTA, of HELLFIRE is M.I.A, most likely K.I.A."

Kiara thanked him and excused herself. She went into a nearby storage closet and locked the door. She then slid to the floor, pulled her legs in and wept.

"What was that?" asked Pasagoa as the floor stopped shaking.

"100 pounds of military grad explosive." Assrak said. Everyone turned to face him. Even though they had their helmets on, it was clear that they were all giving him strange looks. "What? I like things that go BOOM."

"Any idea where it was?" Thea asked him in a sarcastic voice.

"Safe room 565." Irish said to him.

"Do you have some sort of special talent as well Captain?"

"No, I just looked up the damage report on the wall terminal here." He said as he revealed the terminal.

"Ohâ€¦"

"According to this, Safe room 565 was just around the corner and the

nearest active safe room is 570, right here." He pointed at a white blip on the terminal screen.

"Maybe Crow's there." Assrak commented.

"There or not, we need to rest. We can't keep going like this." Thea said.

"You're right." Irish said. "Fine, we'll stay there and rest for a few hours, but the more time we waste, the less likely it is that we'll find Delta alive."

"That isn't part of the mission!" Pasagoa began to say.

"I am NOT leaving him behind!" Irish bellowed at Pasagoa. Suddenly, the radar started to beep. Irish turned to see what looked like a muscular Falling approaching them. It had the face that was clearly alien, though there were a number of human faces scattered around the different parts of its body. It had a tail that looked a lot like that of a Lizard and, what appeared to look like, fleshy blades growing out from where its hands should be. It started to pick up some speed.

"So do we stay and fight or make a break for the safe room?" Assrak asked as he brought his rifle up to bear on the creature. "On three, run." Irish said as he prepped a frag grenade. "THREE!" They all started to run for safe room 570. There was an explosion from behind them, from the frag grenade, and an ear piercing screech. They sprinted past the wreckage of safe room 565, unable to look inside. Irish consulted his HUD for 570's location. The closest way to reach it was to jump across an elevator shaft. When they reached the shaft, there was no way for them to jump the shaft.

"Now what?" Assrak said in despair.

"You first." Irish told him and before Assrak could protest, he had already been thrown to the other side. "Pasagoa, you're next." Pasagoa then propelled himself across the shaft and landed next to Assrak. Then Thea was forced across. Everyone shouted at Irish to hurry up and jump. He went for a run up to be met by the face of the Falling that they were running from.

"IRISH, RUN!" Assrak bellowed at him. Irish sprinted like a mad man towards the shaft, with the Falling right behind him. When he reached the shaft, he jumped for the others. He fell short of the doorway and just managed to grab the ledge. Everyone rushed to help him up. They pulled him up just as the Falling hit the shaft, exactly where Irish had been. It then plummeted down the shaft, whaling.

"That was WAY too close, thanks guys." Irish said as he got up off the floor. He consulted his HUD for 570's location. To his amazement it was right opposite them. He walked over to the door and whacked the door. A slit opened in the door and a pair of eyes stared out at them. Then they disappeared and the door opened. A burly man ushered them in. When they were all in, he closed the door, locked it, barred it and put a small barricade up behind it.

"Are you looking for Professor Crow?" the burly man asked.

"Yes, we were sent to find him." Pasagoa said. "How did you

know?"

"Someone just like you was looking for him."

"Delta was here?" Irish said. "I knew he was still alive!" he said triumphantly.

"I'm afraid that we can't confirm that." The burly man said sorrowfully.

"What do you mean? Where's Delta?" Irish demanded.

"Irish I presume?" a voice said from behind the burly man. He moved to reveal Kiara.

"Kiara? What are you doing here?"

"I'm working with the Professor." She motioned for Irish and the rest of HELLFIRE to follow her. "I'll tell you what we know about Delta.

10. Chapter 10

ODST RED ALERT

Part 10

_There was a loud bang as another Plasma mortar impacted off the barricade. More and more Covenant kept on pouring into the trench opposite. Then the whining sound that any UNSC Marine recognised as either extraction or reinforcements filled the air. "Rides here," the Lieutenant shouted over the radio. "Everyone, make a break for it. I'll cover you." _

"_Not without you sir!"_

"_Andrew, I said go!"_

"_I won't leave you Father!"_

Delta awoke to a moist felling on his face and muffled voices. "â€|it was stupid going back thereâ€|"

"Quite, he's coming to."

He opened his eyes and saw a figure standing over him. As his eyes focused he saw that the figure was dressed in a blue security uniform.

"Where am I? Who are you?" Delta mumbled.

A burly man with a number of small scars across his face looked straight at him. He offered his hand to help Delta up. "Name's Titan, of da Orbital Elevator security team." When Delta was on his feet Titan pointed to another person who was with him, a Marine in Desert brown UNSC heavy armour with a red helmet and a lowered visor. A 3 day old beard showed where his face was exposed. "He's da Gunny Sergeant of da Viper Squadron."

"Everyone calls me Viper." He extended a hand for Delta to shake. When Delta clasped it he was nearly pulled off his feet when Viper tried to throw him over his shoulder and into a wall behind him. Before he could try again, Delta wrenched himself free from his vice like grip and reached for his pistol. When he brought his hand back up empty he felt something smacking off the back of his head. He turned to see a child with a few rocks in his hand. Before he could react, Titan had come from behind him and had Delta's sword against his neck and Viper had his sidearm aimed at him. "Don't make me shoot you." he warned. He put his hand out and asked for Delta's radio.

"It's in my helmet." Delta replied. Viper lowered his pistol and swore, giving Delta time to catapult Titan over his shoulder and retrieve his sword. As Delta took a stance he asked Viper why he was so angry.

"When we found you, your helmet was half shredded to pieces. We can't use it now."

"Why did you want my radio anyway?"

"It was our only way of contacting the UNSC." Viper holstered his pistol.

"Where are we?"

"Safe room 520." Delta looked at the door with a look of horror. "What's wrong?"

"The Falling should have beaten the door down by now." Delta told him.

"Yeah we know, but for some reason they don't attack places where the power is out." He went on to explain that his squad were the first to encounter the Falling. Before the station lost power, all of the Falling were centred around the bottom of the ship. "When the power failed, they started to scream horrifically and began to push their way up the upper, more heavily populated areas." He moved toward the child. "This little one survived because he hid in the shadows. We think that they are affected by light."

"What do you mean?"

"He means dat dem Zombies are scared of da light." Titan explained as he offered him some canned food. As Delta munched on what seemed like caned peaches he surveyed the room. It looked a lot like a restaurant or canteen that was missing a few tables and chairs.

"Hay, sorry about attacking you earlier on." Viper said.

"No harm done." Delta said with a smile. "Why did you attack me anyway?"

"The Falling have released some sort or spore into the air that is attracted to certain genotypes in some humans. I didn't want to risk it." Viper told him.

"What do you mean? What do the spores do?"

"They infect the host's brain and cause them to become very over protective. If the host feels that a sneeze could wipe out the human race, they would kill the person who sneezed. They will betray comrades for the "Greater Good". Eventually, they have a violent reaction to the spores and die. A few hours later they are reborn as one of those zombies." Delta stood up and ran for the door. "Where are you going?"

"Someone under my command was acting just like that and he's in a safe room with around 50+ people. I have to get back to them."

"What you just said sounds like your friend is nearing the transformation phase."

"More reason for me to get back to them." Viper grabbed his arm and pulled him towards another door.

"You'd never reach them in time on foot." He input a code into a wall terminal and a large door opened in front of them. "You can use this if you let us come with you. I'm sick and tired of these lower levels."

Irish slumped against a wall, trying to keep his emotions in check. He had lost many good friends and comrades during the human-covenant war, yet Delta had always been there with him. He had helped start up HELLFIRE and had been with Irish all the way through the final stages of the war, to Hell and back. When they were together it was as if no-one could harm them, that they were invincible. Now, after surviving Darla, the assault on Africa and into the Ark, he was dead. "No, I refuse to believe that." Irish said to himself. "He wouldn't just commit suicide like that, that wasn't the way he was going to die. You said that it wasn't our time Andrew, that's what you said, so until I have physical proof that you're dead, I won't stop looking for you." Irish went to talk to the rest of HELLFIRE who were by the doorway talking with the burly man. On his way to them he saw Kiara walking into the room where ALPHA 06 was with, what looked like, medicine.

"Hay, Captain." Thea greeted him. Everyone else, including the door man, started to talk about Delta, how awesome he was on the battlefield and how friendly he was to be around.

"Captain," Pasagoa started "How did you know that Kiara person?"

"Firstly, Kiara is her code name, just like mine is Irish. Secondly, she's a Caâ€¦" before Irish could finish, there was a roar as something came up the corridor, then something started to bang on the door, alerting everyone in the safe room. HELLFIRE stacked the doorway as the door man grabbed his machine gun turret. He peaked through the slit in the doorway to see what was there.

"It can't be..." the door man said.

"Gustew, open the door!" called a very familiar voice from outside the door. Gustew hurried to open the door. When it was fully open, four figures rushed into the safe room. One was a child, the rest were fully grown men, one in a security uniform, another in UNSC heavy armour with a DMR strapped to his back, a pistol by his side and a shotgun in his hands and the last inâ€¦Mark VI SPARTAN custom

armour, minus a helmet, with a Katana strapped across his back.

"Delta? Is that you?"

Suddenly, there was a scream coming from the other side of the safe room and Kiara ran out of ALPHA 06's room—followed by a limping ALPHA 06.

"We're too late." Viper said.

11. Chapter 11

ODST RED ALERT

Part 11

Kiara fell to the floor as she tried to get away from ALPHA 06. She rolled out of the way just as he put his fist into the floor, causing a small crater. As he got back onto his feet part of his glove had ripped, revealing part of his hand. His skin had turned a creamy-brown colour and was dripping dark, brown blood. Before he could charge at her again, three men, the same ones that had just entered the safe room, tackled him to the floor. After a desperate struggle, ALPHA 06 was subdued and was being held by the heavy UNSC and the Security guard. The SPARTAN armoured soldier went to grab 06's helmet.

"Hold him steady!" Delta told Titan and Viper as he grabbed ALPHA 06's helmet. The pressure seals disengaged and he pulled it away, effortlessly. He stared at ALPHA 06's face. It had already begun to transform into that of a Falling. His skin was a mix of tan and brown and his eyes were blood shot red. Boil like spots had appeared on his face and his teeth had grown pointier.

"He can't be saved." Viper said as he motioned for Delta to take his pistol. When Delta went to take it, ALPHA 06 broke free from his captors grasp. Before he could do anything, Titan had recovered and grabbed his arms.

"I got 'im!" he shouted but before he could move him closer to Delta and Viper, ALPHA 06 turned his head 180° to face Titan and head butted him. Titan fell back against a wall and hit the ground. Before he could get up ALPHA 06 had already pounced onto him. Before anyone could react, ALPHA 06 had sunk his fangs into Titan's neck. Titan's screams for help were racked with pain, blood starting to appear in his mouth. ALPHA 06 didn't let go of Titan's neck until he had ripped off most of his left hand side. He then started to dig his hands into his chest, ripping out chunks of skin and muscle. Instinctively Delta grabbed his sword and, as quick as lightning, severed ALPHA 06's left arm. He let out a wail and dismounted Titan. He clutched his shoulder where his arm was severed and charged at Delta.

"EAT THIS!" someone shouted and thousands of bullets shot towards ALPHA 06, making him stop. He turned and jumped into the vent and scampered off. Delta sheathed his blade and ran back to Titan, who already had Viper and Kiara tending to his wounds. Most of his neck was missing but, mercifully, ALPHA 06 had missed his wind pipe so he

wouldn't suffocate but he was losing way too much blood.

"Come on man, you can't die." Viper told him. "What about all of your plans? You still need to make it big at Griffball." Titan clasped his hand, tightly, and tried to laugh but all that came out was blood filled coughs. Then the light in his eyes vanished and his hand went slack. Viper put his hand on Titan's face and closed his eyes. Delta put his hand on Viper's shoulder and tried to comfort him.

Thea punched Assrak in the arm. "Eat this?"

"What? Did I say something wrong?"

"Well seeing as what happened over there," Pasagoa said motioning towards the body of the security guard, "Yes."

"Ohâ€¦I didn't realise."

"Well make sure that you think before you talk again." Thea said. They all waited for Irish to say something but instead he walked towards the corpse. When he was a few steps away, Kiara was embracing the SPARTAN soldier. When they were done he turned towards Irish.

"Long time no see, Captain." Delta said to him as he saluted Irish.

"I knew that you weren't dead." Irish said as he put his arm over Delta's shoulder and started to lead him to the other members of HELLFIRE. After Delta had shook hands with everyone else, he introduced Viper and explained what had happened to him since he was separated from them. Viper then excused himself and went back over to Titan's corpse.

"Oh, Captain," Assrak said, "You still haven't told us about how you know Kiara." Delta eyed Irish.

"What does he mean?" He asked Irish. Thea interrupted him before he could answer.

"He was telling us about Kiara just before you knocked onto the door. Oh, and he also told us about you and the Shadow Solider program." Delta stared at Irish with disbelief.

"You told them about the Shadow Soldier program? You know that that was filed above Top Secret for a reason. We could both be court-martialled for this."

"I haven't told them about anything other than you were part of it and that it preceded the SPARTAN Program." Irish tried to reassure him.

"That doesn't matter! The fact that they know about it is bad enough!" Delta put his hands on his head in despair. He turned to face everyone. "You must all swear that you will NOT, under any circumstances, reveal the Shadow Soldier program to anyone else. Under pain of death."

"What's in it for us?" Thea asked.

"Firstly, I won't have to be discharged from the UNSC." Delta told him.

"You're not serious." Thea said to him. Delta moved towards him and only stopped when he was one inch away from Thea's visor.

"I think you'll find that I am." He took a step back and continued. "Secondly, I'll tell you the entire story behind me enlisting into the Shadows." After a minute of contemplation, Assrak stepped forward.

"I swear I shall keep the Shadow Soldier program a secret, even under pain of death, SIR!" Everyone else then fell in and swore the same oath.

"Thank you." Delta said, obviously relieved. He motioned for them all to follow him towards one of the corners of the room and told them to begin to tell them the whole story of him and the Shadows. When they were all comfortable, they removed their helmets. "When I was younger, about 5, I wanted to be a doctor. My parents always wanted the best for me and I always wanted to make them proud." He paused. "On my 6th birthday, my parents took me out to see a movie, the best time of my life. What you may not know is that my parents were some of the lead researchers at Opticare, so they were loaded, to put it simply. As we came out of the cinema we were attacked by thugs. They demanded that my parents give them their bank details. They told me to run and hide, so I did. There was gunfire and after a few minutes I emerged from my hiding place and went to find my parents. I found them with numerous bullet holes all over their bodies. While I was crying, one of the thugs, who was still nearby, appeared and tried to kill me. I closed my eyes and waited for my inevitable end. It didn't come. I opened my eyes and saw the thug thrashing around in the grasp of a big, muscular stranger. There was then a crack and the thug was still. The stranger told me to go with him to safety, so I did."

"That was a bit stupid don't you think?" Pasagoa said.

"My parents had just been killed and I was 6 years old. I think you can forgive me." Delta said quite aggressively. "It turns out that he had been tasked with protecting me if my parents were ever killed. He was a member of a gang called 'The Avengers'."

"Why did they go with a name like that?" Assrak asked.

"I think they stole the idea from the old 21st century Marvel comics. The Avengers were made up of hooligans, bounty hunters and ex-military. After I met the leader, Nick Nightstalker, I became a Junior Avenger and used all of my parent's money to fund them. After my first mission, Nick started to appreciate me more and by the time I was 13, he had adopted me. Anyway, they had really old weapons."

"Like what?" Thea asked.

"Old M-40s, M-20s, AK-47s, Thompson sub-machine guns and a few P-90s." Everyone looked amazed.

"How did you manage to accomplish anything with those antiques?" Thea asked him.

"Tell me about it. When I came of age, 15, I was given one of the P-90s. Another high moment in my life. It was around this time that I was tasked with hunting down the leader of the "Hollow Souls" gang. It was very personal. The leader, Zane Galway, was the man behind the murder of my parents. As I was gathering leads, I met my grandfather, Master Cain of the Way of the Warrior, Bushido. I stayed with him for a few months, with Nick's permission, and found out more about my target. During that time, he trained me in all of the martial arts that he knew, Tae kwon do, Karate, Shadow Boxing and in Bushido, the Way of the Warrior. After my time with him was up, he presented me with all of me belts and his most prized position. His Katana." He reached over his shoulder and brought round his sword. On the sheaf, there were hundreds of small gems, Diamonds, Emeralds, Rubies and Sapphires, which all formed the shape of a Dragon. The hilt of the sword continued the pattern of the Dragon's tail. The blade itself was spotless and razor sharp. "It originally was my father's but when he met my mother, he gave it to my Grandfather. After I left to hunt down Zane, I thought he knew nothing about me. I was wrong. He attacked my Grandfather's dojo to get to me. He killed my Grandfather right in front of my eyes. Needless to say, I killed Zane but I was distraught for the next few months. A few years later, the Human-Covenant War began so all of the Avengers joined the UNSC. We were all chosen, except for Nick and a few others who were put into ONI, for the Shadow Soldier Program. We went through months of training and biological enhancements. We then went out to war. I think you know the rest."

"That was very interesting," Assrak said, "but that still doesn't tell us how you know Kiara."

"Kiara was a childhood friend of mine when I wanted to be a Doctor. When I joined the UNSC, she was already in ONI. She worked along with Nick in most of his assignments." He turned to look at her. "When I left for the outer colonies, where the Covenant had just begun their attacks, she was heading off to Orion 4 with the rest of her research squad."

"Wait," Pasagoa stopped him. "HER squad?"

"Yeah." He turned to Irish. "I thought you had already told them?"

"I didn't have a chance. You knocked on the door while I was explaining." A grin appeared across Delta's face.

"Yes, she was in charge of a squad. Gentlemen, Kiara is a Captain in the Office of Naval Intelligence."

12. Chapter 12

ODST RED ALERT

Part 12

"So, what rank were you when you two started going out?" Pasagoa asked.

"That's Private I'm afraid." Delta said with a grin on his

face.

"Come on! No secrets between friends." Thea said.

"Like I said, it's Private." A grin appeared on their faces as they caught the hint he was giving them.

"Andrew? A word please?" Kiara called to him from the door to Crow's office.

"Oh, someone's in trouble." Assrak said, presuming that it was over what Delta had just told them.

"I'll be back in a minute." Delta said as he rushed over to Kiara. They stood at the doorway talking for a few seconds before they both vanished into Crow's Office.

"Right. We've all been up for about 12 hours so you all must be tired. Go and grab some R and R." Irish told them. As they all dispersed to the different corners of the saferoom, he tried to contact Hunter. He tried twice but was met with the same interference. "Must be out of range or something." Irish told himself and found a nice spot to fall asleep.

"You're positive?" Delta said as Professor Crow told him that he had found a way to disrupt the Falling spores.

"Yes, but I will need to insert it into the station's ventilation system."

"That's crazy. The Ventilation Control Centre is 2 levels below us, along with the rest of the Falling."

"That's why I will need to requisition some of the ODST's here...including some of HELLFIRE."

Delta looked at him. "You will have to ask Irish about that, but how are they supposed to put the cure into the vent system."

"I'll be going with them," Crow said, "As well as Miss Sanders." Delta looked at Kiara with an expression of worry. "You didn't tell him, did you?"

"He only found out about your plan just now." Kiara told him.

"How are you supposed to make it down to the Control Centre in a wheel chair?" Delta asked him.

"I won't be." Crow said as he lifted himself out of his chair and walked over towards Delta, who was stunned. "I had to determine how and why the Falling could regenerate so fast. The answer. The spores." He motioned towards the Falling that he had asked for. It lay on the examination table, dead. "I infected myself with Falling DNA to see how I would react to it. Almost immediately my legs started to grow back. I injected myself with my cure and the rapid cell division has stopped. I believe it to be because the spores have now effect on me anymore."

"That's all well and good but how is this going to help us?"

"If they can't use the spores to regenerate then they are as vulnerable as we are."

"I don't see why you need to take Kiara along."

"It's encase I turn into a Falling or am killed on the way to the Ventilation Controls. That's why I'm asking for some of HELLFIRE." Eventually, after running out of arguments, Delta submits to the plan.

"I don't like this plan." Irish said when Crow asked for some of his ODSTs.

"We don't really have a choice." Delta said before Crow could reply. "It's either we do this and risk a few men or risk a lot more when we move up towards HUNTER, speaking of which, have you been able to get in contact with him?"

"No. I think we must be out of range or something." Irish said.

"Hmm." Crow said as he pondered something. "Could it be that the spores also affect communication?"

"If that were true, then even if we managed to get up to HUNTER's position, we still wouldn't be able to call for an extraction." Delta said. They all stood for a few minutes before Irish said that he would not order his men to go to the Control centre, but that if they volunteered to do it, he wouldn't stop them.

"I only have one problem." Irish asked. "The power is still out in most of the station. How do you propose to get the Ventilation System powered up?"

"I thought that you had sorted the power out before you arrived here?" Delta asked.

"We were on our way to the Power Relay station when we stopped here." Irish told him.

"Well, I guess that we will have to take care of that now won't we?" Delta told him. He turned to go brief the rest of HELLFIRE.

It was a few minutes before the operation was to begin and everyone was making their last minute preparations. Irish was giving orders to the soldiers who were staying to defend the saferoom, Assrak was saying good bye to a girl he had spent most of his time with before he met up with Pasagoa and the rest of the ODSTs who were going with Crow to the Ventilation Control Centre, Thea was packing a backpack full of all the things he would need to restore the stations power and Delta was sitting on the ground with his sword in front of him as if he were meditating. He was wearing ALPHA 06's helmet because it was the only spare helmet available to him. Kiara came over to him just as he was getting up.

"Why did you agree to let me go with the Professor?" She asked him.

"I didn't but there's no choice. Either I let you go with him and increase our chances of getting out of here or I will have to destroy

the station to kill every one of these monsters." Delta said just as he put his helmet on.

"Why is that only you, Irish and Thea are going to reboot the power relay?"

"If we took anyone else then there wouldn't be enough people to protect everyone here. Besides, in a smaller team, we can slip past most of the Falling and get to the relay in no time. This is the best way for us to complete this mission. Don't worry. I'll have Irish and Thea covering my back, and no Falling can best me."

"I hope so because if you die, I'm going to drag you back from hell and kill you myself."

Delta burst out laughing. "I love you too." They hugged and moved to their teams for the mission. Soon after they all piled out through the saferoom doors and split up, Delta, Irish and Thea proceeded towards the power relay where as Crow, Kiara, Assrak, Pasagoa and a few of the other ODSTs went the opposite direction towards the Ventilation Control Centre.

"Assrak? Pasagoa?" Delta called over the radio.

"Yes Delta?" they both answered in unison.

"Protect Kiara for me would ya? 'Cause if she gets hurt out there, I'll kill both of you." They laughed. "I'm serious." They stopped laughing and, Delta was sure that he heard them gulp.

"Delta, stop terrorising my squad and help me get this vent open." Irish ordered.

13. Chapter 13

****ODST RED ALERT****

****Part 13****

"Can you guys move any faster?" Delta asked from behind Irish and Thea. They had chosen to go through the vents to bypass most of the Falling on the way to the Power Relay but Thea had said that, since he knew where the relay was, he should be at the front, leading everyone else. Unfortunately, he was very slow at moving in a vent.

"Patience is a virtue." Thea told him.

"Virtue or not, if we don't have the power back on by the time Crow gets to the Control Centre, they won't be able to get the spore cure airborne before they get swamped by Falling."

"Right, I'm sick and tired of you two arguing." Irish said. "Everyone out of the vent now! We're walking it from here." Irish started to kick at a vent cover until it gave way. It started to fall but it was a while before it hit the ground. Irish looked out of the vent to see where they were. They were in a part of the tunnel connecting the Orbital Elevator with the planet below. The vent cover had landed on a service ledge, 50 feet below them. "I think we should go a little

further before we get out." Irish suggested. When Thea and Delta looked out the vent, they said in unison, "I agree." For the next few minutes they proceeded further on down the vent until they finally reached somewhere safe to drop. When they were all on the ground, Thea consulted a station map for directions.

"This way." He said and led them all towards a dark room. They activated their lights and looked around the room. It looked a lot like a security station except that there was no security equipment or monitors.

"Looks like this place has been stripped of...well, everything." Irish said. "But why?"

"I think a better question would be, by whom?" Delta replied. They continued to search the room. "Why did you bring us in here?" Delta asked Thea.

"The map said that this was the quickest way to the replay."

"Well, looks like the map is wrong. This is a dead end." Delta said as he leaned against a wall. Suddenly, the wall started to move and it fell backwards, revealing a massive hole in the ground. The wall fell through the hole and crashed several times before finally resting after going through, at least, two levels. Everyone crowded around the hole.

"Look. There's the entrance to the Power relay." Thea pointed out. The entrance was three floors below them.

"Let's get moving then. That crash will definitely alert the Falling." Irish said as he began his descent through the hole.

"I have a bad feeling about this." Delta said.

"We'll be fine." Thea said. "We'll be long gone by the time the Falling get here."

"I know. But it's not us I'm worried about."

"How much longer until the door's open?" ALPHA 20 asked as they had been out in the open for over twenty minutes.

"It would go smoother if you lot would help us move this blasted door!" Pasagoa shouted at him, obviously annoyed.

"What's taking them so long to get the power back up?" Assrak said to himself.

"Got it!" someone shouted and the security door started to yield and began to open, with some help from the ODSs.

"About time." ALPHA 20 said. "Right, Professor, Captain, you may proceed." The monotony of soldiers passed beyond the threshold of the security door onto the level that the Ventilation Control Centre was on. "I hope you know the way from here Professor." ALPHA 20 said.

"Of course I do." Crow told him. "I did most of my research on this level."

"Good, 'cause I don't want to get lost down here with so many Falling readings on my radar." Everyone turned to him before they checked their own radars. It was true that there were life signs that weren't human but they were too far away to be of any concern.

"Don't worry." Kiara told him. "So long as we're very quiet they won't notice us. Let's keep moving. We're nearly there." After a few minutes they arrived at another security door but this door was far smaller than the others that they had encountered. "Ah, here we are." Kiara announced. They began the same procedure as with the other security doors, unlock the safety clamps and then manually open the door. Because of this door's size, it didn't take long to open it. With it open, everyone proceeded into the Control Centre. The main section of the Control Centre was a terminal on the floor above, overlooking a large cylinder like structure, most likely the Ventilation Master Computer. It was here that the cure would have to be inserted and allowed to circulate, whereas the terminal above would be used to distribute the cure around the Orbital Elevator. But, in order to do that they would need the power switched back on. From here they split into two groups, Kiara, Assrak and three other ODSs would take a position up by the terminal, whereas everyone else would remain by the Master Computer to help Crow circulate the cure.

"Hurry!" Crow ordered. "We need to make sure that the cure has been circulating for at least five minutes before we can distribute it." Crow's men looked at him, confused.

"We can't do that until the power comes back online." Pasagoa told him.

"But we must as when the power comes back on, there's an increased chance that we will be found by the Falling and then it would be too late to distribute the cure around the station."

"Okay then, how are we supposed to provide the power for it then?" Crow walked over to the Master Computer and pressed a button which caused eight rods began to appear around its base.

"Care to give it a push?" All the ODSs groaned at the fact that they would have to do some manual labour but submitted and began to push the rods around in a circle.

"Hay, Assrak?" Pasagoa called.

"Yeah?"

"Want to swap places? You come down here and I'll go up there?"

Assrak laughed. "No chance mate. Delta charged me with protecting Kiara. I don't want him killing me now do I?"

"He charged me with that as well you know." Pasagoa responded.

"Yeah, but I'm a better fighter than y..." He stopped in mid-sentence. "Do you hear that?" True enough, there was a crashing sound coming from above them. All of a sudden, part of the ceiling

collapsed and fell to the floor. Thankfully, it was too far away from the Master Computer to cause any damage. A few ODSs nudged closer to investigate it further before being rebuked by Crow.

"You can look at it after we have the power back on. Come on, back to work." They all returned to their positions and began to turn the rods again. Meanwhile, up at the terminal, Assrak's radio started to beep.

"Assrak here."

"Assrak? It's Delta. We've reached the power relay and are beginning the reboot sequence. Can you transfer me to Kiara or Crow please? Whichever one is controlling the power flow."

"That would be Kiara, hold on a second." He alerted Kiara and transferred Irish to her com. piece.

"Kiara here."

"Kiara, we're about to reboot the power but we need to know where to send it first. Can you give us your terminal code?"

"Sure, just let me find it." She clicked a few buttons to bring up the Ventilation Terminal's system information section. "This terminal's code is HD45-67."

"HD45-67, right, got it. Light it up Thea!" A moment after delta had said that, the power returned to the chamber, followed by the cheers of the ODSs.

"You may go and look at that rubble now if you want." Crow said. "We don't need to leave for a few more minutes." They all started to move towards the rubble, all except crow and Kiara who remained where they were to distribute the cure. By the time Assrak reached the rubble, the others had already investigated most of it.

"Find anything?" he asked them.

"Just a lot of rock and dust." Pasagoa responded.

"So I came all the way down here for nothing?" Assrak said disappointed.

"Well, I did say did you want to swap positions but noooooooooooooo, you had to stay up top."

"Shut up." Assrak said as he moved back to the Master Computer. "So, Doc. How much longer until the cure is around the station?"

"That will be done in a few seconds but it will take up to an hour before all of the spores have been neutralised."

"But we don't need to stay here for that, do we?"

"No. Once the cure is in the air it will seek out the spores and annihilate them. We should get back to the saferoom now."

"Okay. I'll let Delta know we're going back." Assrak moved away to com. Delta.

"Delta here."

"Yeah, it's Assrak. We're all done here so we're going to..." he was cut off in mid sentence by one of the ODST's screaming. He turned to look and saw one of the ODST's suspended in mid-air with a flesh-like spike, about ten feet long and a foot wide, piercing his body. "What the hell?"

"Assrak what's going on? Assrak? ASSRAK?" Delta called down the com. channel but Assrak heard none of it. He was too transfixed on the creature emerging before him out of the rubble. It looked like any regular Falling only it was over 15 feet and had big, muscular arms that it used to support its body. Everyone brought their weapons to bear on it and fired. All of the bullets impacted but did no damage what so ever. It then roared, deafening everyone monetarily. By the time everyone's hearing was back, the monster had charged into a group of ODST's, sending most flying but began to pound the rest into the ground. Before he could stop himself Assrak screamed, "MOVE! GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE NOW!" He began firing wildly at the creature, trying to get its attention. A few bullets impacted into its face and it stopped momentarily. Seeing its weakness, everyone else opened fire on its face. It started to squeal in pain before punching the ground, causing more of those spikes to appear. One appeared just in front of Assrak, narrowly missing him but impacting into the wall behind him, causing it to fall on top of him, pinning him to the ground. Before he could move, he blacked out.

14. Chapter 14

****ODST RED ALERT****

****Part 14****

"Assrak come in." Delta ordered down the radio. "ASSRAK!"

"What's going on Delta?" Irish asked him.

"Something's wrong. Assrak just cut off and then started ordering everyone to..." he stopped in mid sentence before turning away and talking into his radio. "Kate come in. Kate come in. KATE!"

"What's wrong?" Thea asked Irish. "And who's Kate?"

"Kate is Kiara's real name. Delta only calls her that when he's off duty or when something bad has happened and we've lost contact with Crow's group. I fear that they may have been attacked by Falling."

"We have to get down there and see if anyone's still alive." Delta finally said after he stopped speaking into the radio.

"Impossible. It would take too long to get down there. We would be better off heading back to the saferoom and trying to contact HUNTER and UNSC Command for an extraction."

"We cannot leave if there are survivors down there." Delta protested. "There has to be someone still alive."

"We're going back to the saferoom and that's an order Lieutenant!" Irish only called Delta by his rank when he was angry and/or serious about something.

"We have to see if there are any survivors. I'll go down by myself if I have to and I don't care if you court marshal me for it. I will NOT lose her again."

"There may be a way for us to get down there quickly." Thea interrupted.

"How?" Delta and Irish both said in unison. Thea motioned them closer to a nearby terminal where he brought up the station map.

"We're here and they are down here. It would normally take us four hours to get down there on foot or twenty minutes by elevator but because of your little accident with the wall, we can just rappel down to the ventilation centre."

"How long would that take?" Irish asked.

"About eight minutes tops."

"What do you say Captain? It wouldn't take that long to get down there and, most likely, we'd have a higher chance of finding more survivors." Delta said. After a few seconds of contemplation, Irish responded.

"The only problem I can think of with this plan is that how are we supposed to get the injured back to the saferoom with the falling chasing us. But, I guess we'll just have to cross that bridge when we come to it." He exited the Power Relay room and went to the hole, where he attached his harness. He motioned for Delta and Thea to join him. When they were all ready they began their decent.

Just as Thea had predicted, it took them eight minutes to reach the Ventilation Control Centre. When they reached the Control centre, they were horrified by the scene that they were faced with. Most of the ODSs that had accompanied Crow to the Ventilation Control Centre were suspended in mid-air by flesh-like spikes emerging from the ground and piercing their bodies. The rest of the ODSs were lying on the ground, some under rubble, others in pieces.

"This is...this is..." Delta stammered.

"We never should have come down here." Irish said. He grabbed Delta's arm and began to steer him back towards their ropes. As they were going back to the hole something caught Delta's eye. It was something shinny under a pile of rubble. He stopped and stared closer at it, thanks to his helmets magnification program.

"What's wrong?" Thea asked. After a second of magnification, Delta's HUD showed a helmet with a shattered visor. Inside the helmet was a face, barely recognisable because of cuts, bruises and dirt, contorted as if it were in pain. Then, an eye opened. Delta sprinted towards the body and began to dig away at the rubble.

"Delta, what are you doing?" Thea shouted.

"There's someone alive over here." Delta shouted back, not stopping

as he dug the ODST out from under the rubble. For some reason he wouldn't budge. Delta decided to remove all of the rubble from above the ODST's body. When that was done he knew why he couldn't move him. The same flesh like spikes that were around the Control Centre were piercing different parts of his body. By this time Irish and Thea had joined him. Irish reached under the body and removed the ID tag.

"Delta, look at this." Irish told him as he handed the tag over to Delta. What he read on the tag shocked him.

"Assrak?" Delta said.

"Took you guys long enough to get here." Assrak said through blood spattered coughs.

"Hold on. We'll get you out of here."

"Don't bother; I'll slow you down on the way back to the saferoom." Assrak told him. "Besides, I'm a dead man anyway."

"Don't say that. You have to survive. What about all the things you said you wanted to do as an ODST?"

"What, grabbing glory or getting laid?" Assrak asked.

"I thought it was both?" This caused him to laugh which brought up more blood. Irish then started to talk to him.

"Assrak, where's Kiara and Crow?"

Assrak turned his head, as much as he could, to look at Irish. "Yeah, nice to see you to sir. I'm not sure about Crow but Kiara managed to get to the storage closet on the far side of the room. If he was lucky, Crow got there as well." With this Irish and Thea moved towards the closet. Delta remained by Assrak's side, cutting away at the spikes with his knife.

"You know, we have served together for awhile but I don't even know your name." Delta said trying to keep Assrak awake.

"It's Mathew."

"Nice to meet you Mathew, I'm Andrew." He grabbed his hand and began to shake it slightly. "And this is going to hurt." Delta grabbed one of the spikes and yanked it free from Assrak's body, causing him to cry out in pain.

"What the hell was that? Aren't you supposed to warn me before you do that?" Assrak shouted back.

"If I did that, you would braise yourself, causing it to hurt even more. Now hold still." Delta yanked another spike out, causing Assrak to cry out even more. Meanwhile, Thea and Irish had reached the closet. Thea input the code to open the door and it opened very slowly.

"Geez, would this thing hurry up already." Thea groaned. Suddenly, the door whooshed open and five men ran out, aiming their weapons at Irish and Thea.

"Hold your fire!" Someone ordered from behind them. Emerging from behind their ranks was Kiara. "What are you guys doing here?"

"Delta was worried about you so we had to come down here to find any survivors."

"How many have you found?" she asked him.

"Apart from your group, only one."

"That's not great is it?" One of the ODS'Ts asked.

"Considering that he is in a serious condition, I doubt that we'll be able to get Assrak back to the saferoom."

"Wait, Assrak? He's alive?" Kiara asked.

"Yes, but, as I said, I'm not sure for how much longer."

"That's okay. We found some transportation." Kiara said pointing at a nearby wall. In the wall was a door. Kiara hit a few buttons and they opened to reveal a warthog that seemed to be a troop carrier. She turned back to the other ODS'Ts. "I want you lot to take it outside and get it ready for our trip back to the saferoom."

"What about you?" Irish asked. "What are you going to do?"

"Before I became a Captain, I was my squad's medic and, unlike Delta, went onto medical school."

"Hay, what's that supposed to mean?" Delta shouted back. This caused her to laugh.

"Yeah, hate to be a bother but could you please get over here and help me?" Assrak asked. With that the laughter stopped and Kiara moved to where Assrak was, leaving Irish and Thea to help the other ODS'T's get the warthogs outside into the corridor.

"So, what do you think we should do with him?" Delta asked after he had removed all of the spikes from Assrak's body.

"Not much we can do here except lock his armour down. That should help to stop the bleeding until we can get back to the saferoom. There we should have the necessary equipment to fix him up." Kiara responded.

"What do you mean by locking my armour down?" Assrak asked.

"Basically, it will stop you from bleeding as much. But, I'm afraid while like this you won't be able to move." Kiara told him.

"Will it hurt?"

"It'll sting for a while but it won't be overly painful." Delta told him. "You ready?"

"Sure, why not." With this, they locked his armour down, causing Assrak to yelp.

"Okay, that should be it. Try to move your arm." Delta told Assrak.

"I can't. Guess it successfully locked down then?" Assrak said.

"Yeah. Come on; let's get him into the warthog." Delta said as he grabbed Assrak's arms. After a few minutes, Assrak was in the back of the warthog with the other ODS'Ts. Thea and Irish were up front. Delta helped Kiara get into the back of the Warthog but stopped before he got in himself.

"What's wrong?" Kiara asked him.

"If the powers back, I want to see if I can close that security door." He told her. "It would be a good way of stopping most of the Falling from Proceeding up to the Upper Levels."

"Okay, but you have to be quick after you activate it as they close quite quickly."

"I know. You worry too much." Delta said as he ran towards the Security Door Control Console. He input the close command but nothing happened. He did it again and still the door remained open.

"What's the hold up?" Irish shouted.

"The door won't close." Delta told him.

"Have you tried hitting it?" Assrak shouted.

"What?"

"Sometimes if a door is stuck, kick it and it will release itself."

"I'm not going to kick it Mat..." He was interrupted by a crash from behind him. He turned to see what it was. Standing before him was a gigantic Falling with massive arms, about 12 foot. "What the hell?"

"Andrew, don't move." Kiara said.

"Why?"

"That Falling can't see so they rely on sound."

"Well, I think this one is different."

"Why?"

"Because it's looking straight at me." Before Kiara could reply the Falling struck Delta, sending him into part of the Security Door. Just as Assrak predicted, the door started to close.

"DELTA, MOVE NOW!" Irish bellowed. However, the Falling kept coming at him. It took all of Delta's concentration and skill to dodge its attacks. By the time he got to a safe distance, the door had closed. He activated his radio and resumed his conversation with everyone

else.

"Okay, now what?" He asked.

"We have to regroup somewhere between the Security Door and the saferoom." Irish said.

"Andrew, do you remember Hang Man's Drop?" Kiara asked.

"Yeah, I do. Why?"

"Get there. It's close enough to the Security Door and a place where we can retrieve you." Kiara told him.

"Great idea, except for the fact that it's behind this thing."

"Well, you will have to get past it somehow." Irish told him.

"And how am I supposed to do that?"

"I don't know, run through its legs or something. Just get there." Kiara said and with that the link went dead and Delta could hear the faint sound of the warthog speeding off.

"Guess it's just you and me." Delta said to the Falling. It made a motion that looked as though it was licking its lips. "Hungry?" It lunged at him, trying to pin him down. He dodged and ran past it. "Well tough. If you want breakfast, you're going to have to catch it."

Delta had been running for about ten minutes now but the Falling was still after him. "Persistent, aren't we?" He said to himself. He rounded a corner and remembered something about the stations layout. In every Orbital Elevator there was a section, dubbed Hang Man's Drop. It was a massive shaft that stretched from the top of the station to the very bottom. From where Delta was, it was around the next corner. As he passed the corner he saw it, a warning barricade. "Well, here goes nothing!" He sprinted toward the barricade and jumped onto it, propelling himself off towards a nearby ledge. From here he kicked off and grabbed a ladder that was attached to the wall. It was missing most of the bottom part and he just managed to grab the ladder itself. Before he could pull himself up, the Falling was jumping after him. "At this rate, it's going to get me." Delta said panicking. Before it could grab him, something impacted into the side of its head and caused it to fall down the shaft. There was a smoke trail from where the object hit the Falling. Then he recognised it. It was the trail left by a sniper round. He looked towards its origin and saw Irish standing there with a sniper rifle in his hands. He waved and pointed to the ledge above Delta. Delta started to climb up. When he reached the ledge he was met by hands from the other ODSTs.

"Took you long enough." Irish said as he rounded the corner from his vantage point. He marched everyone back to the nearby warthog and climbed into the front, starting the engine. Delta hugged Kiara just as they began to pull away. Suddenly, the ground started to shake. Behind them, bursting out of the ground appeared the same Falling that had been chasing Delta. "Impossible. I shot it in the head!"

"The spores are still active!" Kiara told him. "They'll be active for a few more minutes."

"Well then, how are we supposed to..." Irish began to say before he was interrupted by Delta.

"If it's not too much bother, STEP ON IT IRISH!" The warthog screeched away followed by the Falling. The ODSs in the back, including Delta, fired on it, trying to slow it down. Delta found a box full of grenades and began to throw some of them at it. No matter what they did, the Falling kept on coming and was starting to gain on them. It started to thrash at the ground where they were, causing Irish to take evasive manoeuvres.

"Hold onto something!" Irish shouted. Suddenly, the Warthog was sent flying. The Falling had made a successful strike. Delta blacked out for a second and when he came to, saw the Falling cornering Kiara and the rest of the ODSs. It was preparing to strike at them. All of a sudden, something clicked in Delta's mind. He rose from the ground, drew his katana and charged at the Falling. It was bringing its arm down to strike everyone. Delta jumped and, sword in hand, impacted into the Falling's fist, causing it to tumble. He ran up the arm and, before the Falling could react, slammed his sword into its head.

"Wow. Delta that was..." Irish began.

"AMAZING!" Assrak finished. Delta began to sheath his blade when he heard something from behind him. He turned just as the Falling swung at him. The spores were still active and it had begun to regenerate. Delta blocked, countered and dodged its attacks but without the element of surprise, wouldn't be able to defeat it. Suddenly, he was flung to the ground by one of the Fallings attacks which caused him to let go of his katana. Before he could grab it, he was wrenched into the air by the Falling. Now he was in its paws, at its mercy. It opened its mouth and moved Delta towards it.

"ANDREW!" Kiara screamed as she watched the scene unfold.

"DELTA!" Irish shouted. The same thought kept going through his mind. "I can't die here. I have to protect them and...I made a promise." He drew his combat knife and, just as his left arm was inserted into the Falling's mouth, rammed it up into its head. It screamed in pain. Delta remembered the grenades he had found. He took one from his belt, pulled the pin and threw it down the Fallings throat. It exploded, sending Delta flying along with different parts of its head. The walking corpse staggered backwards and fell down a nearby shaft. All Delta could hear were people calling out to him before he blacked out.

15. Chapter 15

"What is this? Where am I?" Delta said, looking into what looked like the void. He felt something grab his arm and shred part of his armour. He turned to look at his arm and saw Professor Crow standing beside him. "What are you doing here?" Crow grabbed Delta's arm and caused it to bleed, making Delta cry out in pain.

"One week." Crow told him.

"What?"

"One week." Crow repeated.

"What do you mean?" He released Delta's arm and stepped away. Suddenly, Crow started to change, rapidly, into a Falling.

"You don't have much time left."

Delta opened his eyes and was met by someone staring back at him. The light hit him hard with his helmet off. As he adjusted to the light, he recognised the face as Viper.

"Hay, you're awake." Viper said. He turned to everyone else and bellowed, "HAY, EVERYONE. DELTA'S AWAKE!" Everyone in the saferoom cheered. As Delta tried to sit up, Viper grabbed him and pushed him back down. "Stay down. You need to rest. You took quite a beating."

"What happened?" Delta asked. "How did I get back here?"

"You seriously don't remember?" Viper asked him. "You took down a Falling Behemoth and are still alive to tell the tale. No-one has been able to do that yet."

"So that's what that thing was...Wait, where's Kiara? And Irish? And Thea?"

"Relax; they were the ones who brought you back here when you fell unconscious."

"What about Assrak?"

"What do you think?" Someone said from behind him. Delta turned to see who it was. Standing before him was Assrak, minus some of his armour, wearing a sling around one of his arms and limping on his left leg.

"Mathew, you're okay!" Delta said, getting up to see him. "I thought you were a dead man."

"Yeah, you and me both, but thanks to what you did back there, we were able to get back here where Kiara was able to patch me up."

"Well, at least you're okay. Where are Kiara and Irish?" Delta asked. Assrak pointed towards Crow's Office. Delta excused himself and walked towards the office. He opened the door and walked in on Irish debriefing the ODSTs.

"...and that's us done. You can return to your stations. Dismissed." The ODSTs saluted and exited the room. "Ah, good to see you up and about Delta. How do you feel?"

"Well, for nearly being eaten, just fine." He said in a comedic tone, causing them both to laugh. Kiara then entered the office from a door at the far side of the room. When she saw him she made a bee line for him. "Hi Kat..." he was stopped in mid-sentence by Kiara slapping him

across the face.

"How dare you use that. You know that you can only use it a few more times before it kills you." She scolded him, very distressed.

"I'm sorry. It just happened."

"I thought you had it under control?"

"So did I, but when I saw that thing going to kill you, I couldn't stop myself."

"Well, you have to try."

"Sorry to interrupt but, what are you two talking about?" Irish asked. Delta turned to face him.

"Best if I tell everyone at the same time. Could you round up the guys?"

"Sure, but I expect answers..."

"And that's what you will get. Please, just round them up. I'll be out in a minute." After a few tense seconds, Irish stood and left to get the guys together. "Before I go and tell everyone about my secret, I need to ask you something."

"What is it?" she said, acting as if she had never hit him.

"What happened to Crow and Pasagoa?" She turned to look at the corner of the office where Crow had left his wheelchair.

"They're MIA. I believe they were killed by the Falling but without proof, I can't be certain. Why do you ask?"

"Before I woke up, I had a dream or a vision. I was in utter blackness. Suddenly, Crow appeared and grabbed my left arm. It started to bleed and I felt a great deal of pain. Crow then told me, "One week." He kept repeating it. Then he started to change into a Falling right before my eyes. He then said, "You don't have much time left." That's when I woke up." A shocked expression appeared on Kiara's face.

"You saw him turn into a falling?"

"Yes."

"And he grabbed your left arm?"

"Again, yes." She stepped over to his arm to examine it.

"Where did he touch you?"

"What's with the twenty questions?"

"Tell me! This is important!" She shouted at him, a worried look upon her face. He pointed to the exact spot where Crow had grabbed him in his dream. Kiara started to examine it but before she even touched his arm, she gasped.

"What is it?" delta asked her, concerned. She turned to him and looked very pale, as if she had seen a ghost.

"Do you remember when you fought the behemoth?"

"Little bit hard to forget it. Why?"

"We found a tear in your armour. We believe it to have occurred while you were fighting the Behemoth." She stopped, trying to hold back tears. "The tear is in the same spot Crow touched you in your dream."

"What are you getting at?" It took her a minute to compose herself.

"You've been infected by the Falling." When Delta heard this, it took a minute for it to sink in.

"What?" he said out of either amazement, surprise or shock. Probably all of them. Then it hit him. "Well, the cure should be around the station by now so there's nothing to worry abo..."

"Don't you understand?" Kiara interrupted him. "The cure won't work once you're infected. It's designed to destroy the part the Falling Spores that can infect the human body via the air. Once infected all it will do is delay your transformation."

"But what about Cro..."

"He told you that he was cured so that he could get the cure into the Ventilation System. After he had finished it he was going to shoot himself in the head."

"So that's it. I'm going to die?"

"I'm afraid so." Kiara said before she burst into tears and fell into his arms. "I don't want you to die!" Delta embraced her and joined her in grieving. Then it hit him.

"If the cure won't stop the spores from transforming me into a Falling, then I'll just have to go somewhere where there are no spores." Kiara stared at him as if he were crazy.

"What do you mean?"

"Most likely, Irish is going to call for an extraction as we have completed our mission, we have Crow's data, as well as order the Orbital Elevator to be detached and allowed to drift out into space where we will destroy it..."

"Along with the Falling and the Spores. That's perfect!" There was a knock on the door before Irish walked in.

"I thought you were coming?"

"Coming now." Kiara and Delta said in unison.

Everyone sat around a small, round table commonly found in cafes and restaurants. Irish hadn't been able to get a hold of hunter on the radio, even though the com channels had been cleared thanks to the

cure dispersing the spores, so he was classed as MIA. "Alright, what's this about?" Assrak asked. "We already had our debrief when we got back."

"This is about Delta's actions against the Behemoth." Irish told him.

"You mean that he did something wrong?" Thea asked.

"No, he means that the way I fought it is impossible for any other human to recreate so he wants some answers." Delta answered him. "You remember when I told you that I was the last of the Shadows and that they all died because of the Supper Soldier chemicals that were pumped into them?" They all nodded. "I can only use short bursts of them now and even then I have a number of times that I can use it. When I reach my limit, I will die like the rest of the shadows only my death will be far more...colourful..."

"It's not a joking matter Andrew." Kiara scolded him.

"So you're serious?" Assrak said.

"Yes."

"How many more times can you use these bursts?" Irish asked him.

"About two more times."

"Holy..." Assrak said before being cut off by Delta.

"There's nothing to worry about. I slipped up. It won't happen again. What we really should be worrying about is getting the survivors off this thing."

"What do you mean?" Thea asked.

"We have Crow's data. Our mission is complete. We should call for extraction and get off this thing." Delta explained.

"What about ALPHA, OMEGA and ECHO's mission of securing the Elevator?" Irish asked.

"We had lost the station long before we got here. Besides, even with our numbers, there are not enough soldiers here to secure this place." Delta said, looking at the remaining soldiers. Five ODSs, twelve UNSC Marines, twenty Station Security personnel and one big doorman.

"Hmm, point taken. I guess our priority now is to get the remaining survivors off this station as quickly as possible. I'll radio for a Pelican to extract us." Irish said as he moved to make the transmission.

"What's going to happen to the station after we leave?" Assrak asked.

"Before we leave, I'll contact ONI and request that they detach the station, sending it further away from the Earth. Then I will order its destruction." Kiara answered.

"Isn't that a little extreme?" Thea asked.

"I don't want any of these Falling endangering any living thing ever again." Kiara said.

"Pelicans will be here to extract us and the survivors in two hours. Just enough time to get to the landing zone." Irish said in a sarcastic voice as he was walking back.

"Why? Where is the landing zone?" Assrak asked.

"Where we were dropped off."

"That's four levels above us!" Assrak complained. "How are we supposed to get up there in two hours?"

"That's not what is annoying me." Irish said. "According to the security cameras, that's where most of the Falling are at this present moment and time. It would take us about ten hours to sneak past all of them and even then, I'm not sure if we would get by unseen. I tried to get them to delay but I don't think they heard me."

"What if we used warthogs?" Delta asked.

"We don't have enough for everyone."

"What if we did?" Delta said.

"But we don't so there's no point answering that."

"Humour me."

"We would be able to just plough through them, especially if we had a couple with turrets on them. That and we would make it to the L.Z a few minutes earlier."

"Then we'll just have to find some more." Delta said.

"Sorry to burst your bubble but from where?" Thea asked. Delta stood and walked towards the security terminal. He pulled up the station map and input a command. Now the map showed random pink and red dots at different points on the station.

"If we can get to these different points then we should have enough warthogs to reach the L.Z." Delta said pointing at the pink points.

"What are the red dots?" Assrak asked.

"Those are areas that are either empty or inaccessible." He turned to Irish. "What do you think?"

"I think that it's a crazy plan, but it just might work and we don't really have a choice. Alright, let's dispatch teams to retrieve enough warthogs for everyone." Irish said as he motioned for the other soldiers to draw closer so he could brief them.

"Thanks for the warning Crow." Delta said to himself. "But it looks

like I'll be long gone before the week is over."

16. Chapter 16

****ODST RED ALERT****

****Part 16****

"The hallway was wide enough for the consumers, who used to gather here, to pass through without any major incident. Now, it was filled with a different type of consumer, hundreds of Falling. It was quiet, bar the occasional moan. However that noise was soon replaced with a distant roar. It was drawing closer. Suddenly, lights illuminated the dimly lit hallway, followed by a shower of bullet rain, riddling most of the Falling in its path. Those who were unlucky enough to survive met their fate under the hoofs of these mighty beasts that called them pray..."

"What are you talking about?" Delta shouted to Assrak above the noise of the turret machine gun raining fire on the Falling around them as Irish ploughed through the ones in front of them.

"A though came to me while I was under the rubble before you pulled me out. If I got out of there, I would have to write all of these events up here down. It would make a great story." Assrak told him.

"Mat, I know you like to make stories but let's be realistic, who would want to read something like that?" Delta replied.

"I have to agree with Delta." Irish said after he pulled off a massive power slide. "Besides, he's a better author. If anyone should do a story on this, it should be him."

"That's not fair! It was my idea!"

"Yeah, but you would probably make up stuff to make you look good. I would tell everything as it is."

"Even every gory detail?"

"Yes, every gory detail."

"Fine, you do it." Assrak said, obviously depressed. "Was still my idea so I get the credit."

"Sorry to tell you this but I've been doing a journal while we were up here and I was planning on basing a story on this ."

"What? Oh man, now I won't make enough for..." Assrak stopped in midsentence.

"Enough for what?" Irish asked as he ran over another Falling.

"It's nothing, just forget I said anything."

"Mathew, what are saving up for?" Delta said looking at him funny.

"Oh no." Assrak said with a hint of fear in his voice. "You're not...you're not..."

"Yes I am."

"Wait, what are you doing Delta?" Irish asked.

"Oh man. Why do you always have to give me the look?"

"Because I know it always works." Delta said over Irish's screams of laughter.

"The look? You serious? We used to use that on the new recruits to get them to behave." Irish said in-between laughs and screams from the Falling he killed.

"Yeah, laugh it up. While I'm the still scared by "the look" at least I can drive to an L.Z without driving off a ledge." Assrak said pointing at the safety railing that they were nearing, rapidly. Irish was just able to turn away from it.

"That was close." Delta said.

"What was that?" ECHO 23, the last remaining ECHO member, asked over the radio.

"Irish took his eyes off the road and we nearly went over." Delta responded.

"How'd that happen? I thought he was a good driver?" ALPHA 12, one of the four remaining APLHA members, asked.

"I was giving the look to Assrak." Delta cocked his head as if he was trying to get away from his radio as he was met with the laughter of the remaining ODSs, Marines and Kiara. "Now what are you saving up for Mathew?"

"I can't say. If I do she'll kill me."

"She?" Irish and Delta said in unison. Then it hit them. "You're not..."

"No! Not yet anyway."

"Well we can figure out what to wear when we get back to Earth. Right now there are Falling that are just begging to be slaughtered." Irish concluded.

"Here, here." Delta responded as he pulled the trigger, unleashing a new wave of hell on his victims just centimetres below him.

The convoy of about twenty warthogs, mainly troop carrier variants (BOX warthogs) arrived at the place where they had landed and split from ALPHA, OMEGA and ECHO. They parked up, the seven turret warthogs at the rear to eliminate any Falling that tried to attack them while they waited for extraction.

"Do you want me to close the Security Door?" Thea asked Irish.

"That would help us defend until the Pelicans get here. Go and close

them. We'll protect you while you do that." Irish said as he started to position the warthogs to repel any Falling that tried to charge them. Thea input the close command and the door began to close, very slowly. Suddenly, they heard screaming coming up the hallway, followed by gunfire and someone barking orders. "Thea wait. SOMEONE GET A LIGHT DOWN THERE!" Irish ordered. As soon as he said that, Assrak fired a flare down the hallway. With it now illuminated, they could see a group of civilians running up towards them with an ODS behind them, firing at the Falling pursuing him. "COVERING FIRE!" Irish bellowed as he clambered into a warthog's driver seat. "Delta, man the gun. Let's go see who we have here." Before Delta was fully on, Irish had rammed the accelerator to the ground and was charging towards the ODS. They zoomed past the civilians as they were a few meters from the Security Door. Irish pulled up next to the ODS and beckoned him into the passage side while Delta rained a flurry of bullets at the oncoming Falling. When the ODS was in, they raced back up towards the Security Door only to find it nearly closed. Irish pushed the Warthog to its limits and just managed to get through before the door closed, scraping off some of the paint. When the warthog stopped, everyone got out and the new ODS was identified.

"Hunter?" Delta asked.

"Good to see you again, Lieutenant." Hunter replied shaking his hand.

"Hunter, I thought you were dead. Why were you not responding to my com. messages?" Irish asked.

"Yeah, sorry about that but my radio malfunctioned. All I could do was pick up com. chatter. That's how I knew to come here." Just as Hunter finished, lights appeared from outside the docking bay. The Pelicans had arrived.

"Extraction's here, everyone move." Irish ordered. As the remaining Marines and ODSs directed the civilians towards the Pelicans, the Station began to shake and move, causing everyone to fall to the ground. Even the Pelicans slid a little. "What was that?"

"Oh no..." Delta said from a nearby terminal.

"What's wrong?" Kiara asked.

"The Elevator connecting the Station to Earth has just been severed and the emergency boosters have been activated. The Orbital Elevator is now on a collision course with the Earth."

"That's good. It means that the Station will burn up on re-entry and all the Falling will be killed." Irish said.

"Not if the shield's still up." Delta typed in another command to check Station Systems. "Which it still is."

"Well...I guess that we'll just have to nuke the crash site to destroy the Falling threat." Irish said.

"Or, we could disable the shield, causing the Station to burn up on re-entry." Delta suggested.

"Not an option. Our job's done, now we have to leave. We'll nuke the crash site."

"Uh, Captain?" Hunter said. "There's not enough room in the Pelicans."

"What?"

"With my group of survivors, we're literally squeezing them into each Pelican."

"How many people will be left behind?"

"By our calculations, four civilians or..."

"Two ODS'Ts in Mark VI armour." Delta said. "When would another Pelican be here?"

"ONI's scrambling one now but...three hours."

"Delta, how much time do we have until the Station hits the atmosphere?"

"Three and a half hours."

"If we vacate our seats in the Pelican, you can fit more people in and we can disable the shield before the next Pelican gets here." Irish said to Hunter. Before he could protest, Kiara and Assrak had beaten him to the mark.

"If you stay, then we all should stay." Assrak said.

"We would be able to disable the shield quicker if it was just the two of us." Delta replied. "Besides, you're in no state to crawl through vents and to fight off hordes of Falling."

"But..."

"Assrak. Get back to Earth." Delta said to him. "That's an order."

"Yes Sir." Assrak said, reluctantly and started to limp back to the Pelicans.

"Why do you have to stay?" Kiara said to him.

"I grew up on this station. It's my home, and now it's in the hands of a parasite. If I can't get it back, I'll destroy it. I'll be fine. I have Irish at my back after all." She embraced him tightly.

"You come back alive, ok?" She said as she moved towards the Pelicans. When everyone was onboard, they lifted off and returned to Earth.

"Now that we are all alone and they are out of com. range, tell me your true reason for wanting to destroy this place before it hits the Earth?" Irish asked. Delta staggered back, he wasn't expecting Irish to ask something like that. "Well?"

He took a deep breath and told Irish everything.

17. Chapter 17

ODST RED ALERT

Part 17

Delta and Irish crawled steadily through the air vents, getting closer to the Central Control Console, a massive super computer that controlled all of the stations systems, power networks, air supply and shield generators. They were nearly half way there but they had been traveling in silence since Delta had told Irish that there was a chance that he was infected. After about twenty more minutes of crawling, they exited the shaft and landed on the ground twelve feet below them, weapons at the ready. There was no sign of any Falling so they lowered them. Delta consulted a nearby terminal for their location.

"According to the map, we are about a half mile away from the Central Control Console. If we continue down the hallway straight ahead, we should reach it in about fifteen minutes, if we're quick." Delta told Irish. Irish responded with a nod and continued down the hallway in silence. After a few minutes Delta asked Irish what they should tell the UNSC concerning the Falling but Irish remained silent. "Irish why won't you talk to me?" Delta asked him. Finally, Irish answered.

"Why didn't you tell me about you being infected?"

"I thought that you wouldn't trust me if I told you."

"You've got that right! But at least I would have known that you still trusted me."

"I do trust you." Delta was interrupted again by Irish pinning him up against the wall.

"Then why didn't you tell me? You could have gotten us all killed!"

"I WAS SCARED!" Delta screamed at Irish, forcing him to let him go. "I didn't want what happened to ALPHA 06 to happen to me and I certainly didn't want to be the one to cause someone else to die a death like Titan. Not Kiara, not you and not anyone else and I will do everything and anything I can to stop myself from becoming a monster, even if it means drifting in space while my armor vents the last of my oxygen supply." After a minute in silence, Delta said, "Let's keep going. We're wasting time here." as he began to move down the hallway.

"Delta, I'm sorry for..." Irish began.

"You have nothing to apologize for. You're not the monster here."

"But neither are you," he said as he put his hand on his shoulder. "Even though I may have made you appear as such." Delta turned to look at him.

"In that case, apology accepted." Delta said in a happier tone and together they proceed down the hallway. Suddenly, Delta grabbed his head and fell to his knees.

"What's wrong?" Irish said, kneeling beside him.

"Do you not hear the voices?"

"What voices?"

"_The humans have passed our soldiers and continue to approach The Knowledge. They must be stopped."_

"_Shall I dispose of them Master?" _

"_Yes, deal with them." _

"_May I bring my pet?"_

"_I did wish to convert it as I did you but if you feel that it will help to stop the humans, then you may."_

"_Thank you Master."_

"Delta, what voices?" Irish said, growing increasingly worried.

"I think I just heard a conversation between some Falling. If I'm correct, then, we're going to get ambushed."

"Wait, you heard some Falling speak?"

"I think so."

"Well, if you did hear them, then we will be ready for any attack, whenever it comes. If it is in your head then, just proves my point that I always thought that you were crazy." Irish said, jokingly. They proceed further down the hallway with their weapons in a defensive, cautious state.

Twenty minutes later, they stood outside the Central Computer Control room.

"That was easy enough." Delta said.

"Yeah." Irish replied. "So much for your ambush. Guess you really are crazy." This caused them both to laugh.

"I wouldn't be to sure if I were you." This new voice caused both Delta and Irish to stop laughing and turn to where the voice originated from, behind them. "Please, don't stop laughing. It will be the last thing you ever do." Stepping out of the shadows emerged a Falling of around six foot but had huge muscles on its arms and legs. It had two sword-like spikes emerging out of it's arms.

"Irish, that's one of the voices I heard in my head." Delta told Irish, shock evident in his voice.

"Guess you're perfectly sane then. I don't see any weapon though."

"If you want to see it, all you had to do is ask." Something then started to approach from behind the Falling. When it emerged into the light, it looked a lot like a walking flesh tri-pod. It had a wall attached to the top of it, with a man chained to it. He was clad in only a shirt and underwear, his arms, legs and face bare and covered in cuts and bruises. On closer inspection, the man had a tattoo on his left arm. The same tattoo that Pasagoa had on his arm.

"Pasagoa!" Delta yelled up at him.

"I thought you would recognize him." The Falling said as he turned to look at Pasagoa. "Say bye-bye my pet."

Pasagoa pushed himself forward slowly as if something was pushing into his back, very slowly. His face was contorted in pain. Suddenly, several spikes burst through his hands and legs, making him cry out in pain.

"We have to help him." Delta said before someone gurgled a laugh from above them.

"It's too late lieutenant. Even if you did get me down, I'll be dead in a few hours. I'm sorry." Pasagoa said before he cried out in even more pain just as a spike burst through his chest. He then went silent and found peace in death.

"Rest in peace Pasagoa, you will be missed." Irish said.

"If you think that was good, watch this." The Falling said as he touched the tri-pod, causing the wall that Pasagoa's corpse was on to submerge into it. To both Irish's and Delta's shock, the tri-pod, the wall with Pasagoa still on it and the Falling had merged together and now formed what looked like a Behemoth. Before either of them could react, the Falling hit Irish with the wall sending him flying down the hallway.

"Irish!" Delta called after him. When he didn't get a reply he started to run after him but was blocked by the Falling. "Where do you think you are going?" It said and began to attack him.

Irish flew down the hallway until he hit, what seemed to be, a massive metal door. The wall had fallen a little bit ahead of him. The impact would have paralyzed him if he hadn't been wearing Mark VI armor. "Ow. Now I know what a punching bag feels like." He turned to look at the door. It looked exactly the same as the doors that concealed the station's many warthogs. Suddenly, the door buckled and fell towards him. He just managed to roll out of the way before it hit the ground. He looked inside the room to see what sort of warthog was inside—only what was inside didn't look anything like a warthog. It had two legs and two big mechanical arms. "Oh, I can use this." Irish said as he clambered up into the pilot's seat.

Delta could do nothing but jump, roll and dodge the Falling's attacks. Unlike the Behemoth he fought before, this Falling was super fast. He couldn't get enough breathing room between him and the Falling to counterattack. "Dodge my attacks all you want, eventually you will tire and I will kill you." The Falling said to him in-between its lightning fast attacks. It was right, he couldn't keep dodging its attacks forever, he would get tired, make a mistake

and it would capitalize on it. Suddenly, he slipped on one of his landings and couldn't get out of the Falling's attack. It pinned him up against the nearby wall. "Told you so, though, we thought the infamous Lieutenant Delta of ODSF HELLFIRE would have put up more of a fight." This remark was familiar to Delta and only one person had ever said that to him.

"Is that you, ALPHA 06?"

"You surprise us. We didn't think you would get my name right." Delta was shocked. ALPHA 06 had turned into a Falling but he never thought that he would become something so grotesque.

"What do you mean "us" and "we" 06?" Delta asked.

"We would tell you but you will be dead soon so it won't matter." He began to tighten his grip on Delta. He was trying to squash Delta. However, he loosened his grip and Delta fell to the floor. He looked up at where ALPHA 06 stood only to find the spot vacant. He looked to his left and saw him lying on the ground with a wall on top of him. The same wall that he threw at Irish. He felt the ground tremor and looked towards the source, where Irish had been sent flying. Coming up the hallway was a giant robot thing with massive arms. It was a Cyclops. In the cockpit was Irish.

"Delta, go and shut down the shield. I'll take care of ugly here." Irish said over the radio.

"Irish, that thing isâ€|"

"I heard. But it doesn't matter who he was. Now, he's a Falling that hit me with a wall. He's a dead manâ€|or Falling thingâ€|just shut the shield down."

"Butâ€|"

"That's an order. Don't worry. I was told that if I never made it as a Marines, I would be a welcome addition to the mechanized corp."

"What?" Delta said, puzzled.

"I can pilot a Cyclops better than anyone else that I know. Now get going. I'll handle him." By now, ALPHA 06 was back on his feet and charging at Irish. Irish charged at him and they both collided. Delta knew that there was no other option and entered the Central Control Console chamber.

Delta entered the chamber where the massive super computer was housed. It was about twenty feet high and five feet wide. Delta found a terminal and began to input the command to shut down the shield generators. However, nothing happened. He entered the emergency override code but still nothing happened. Delta swore. The generators had been deadlocked on. There was no way to shut them down. He felt something behind him and turned to look. Nothing was there but there was diffidently a presence out there. He focused on it and it seemed familiar. "You can come out now Professor." Delta called. From out of the shadows emerged Crow only; he had tentacles, about eight feet long each, emerging out of his back. "I though you said that you were cured?"

"I knew that I would turn into a Falling because the spores were too strong but I am different from the other Falling."

"How? You still look like them?"

"But I have still retained my mind. They have all become monsters but I have remained partly human."

"Are you the one they call the Knowledge?"

A look of surprise appeared on Crow's face. "How did you know aboutâ€|"

"I heard ALPHA 06 and someone he referred to as Master saying it."

"Ah, that is veryâ€|troubling." Crow said.

"Why?"

"The one who ALPHA 06 referred to as Master is a creature like I, called the Pain."

"Pain, as in the emotion?"

"Exactly. He is the one in charge of the Falling on this station. The one responsible for the death of hundreds."

"But there is one person who is solely responsible for the deaths of some of the UNSC's greatest soldiers. You." Delta said to Crow. Crow turned to look at him.

"Delta I'mâ€|"

"If you hadn't said that there was a cure for the spores, Pasagoa and the rest of the ODSTs wouldn't have gone down to the Ventilation Control Center and they would all still be alive."

"Delta pleaseâ€|"

Delta drew his pistol and aimed it at Crow. "You are the reason for everything bad that has happened here. Give me a reason why I should just kill you right now."

"If you let me live, I will be able to transport myself to the Falling home world. There, I will be able to develop a cure for me and yoâ€|"

"And how long will it take you to complete it? Two, four, ten days! I'll be dead long before then."

"I will also program the station to self-destruct upon entering the Earth's atmosphere. That will kill anything Falling on the station. Including the spores."

"Then I won't need the cure if there are no spores to transform me now will I?"

"The artifact that I brought with me up here," Crow said revealing a

prism like rock with graphics and runes inscribed into it. "It wasn't the only one that was uncovered at the dig site. We found two."

"What are you getting at?" Delta asked, obviously concerned but still not lowering his gun from Crow.

"If this allowed the Falling to appear on the station, then it's twin would have done the same back on Earth. Spores will flood out of this new breach and will start to affect humanity. Though the effect will only be minor, given time, the spores will become denser and transform everyone on the planet, but you will have already changed. Let me go and I will destroy the station, give you the location of the other prism and create a cure that we can both use. The choice is yours."

18. Chapter 18

****ODST RED ALERT****

****Part 18****

The battle between Irish and 06 was still raging, neither one gaining any ground.

"Give it up Captain." ALPHA 06 shouted. "Unlike your machine, I can't tire and it will eventually break down."

"You'll be dead a long time before that happens." Irish shouted back. He fired a punch into 06's gut, only to have him block it and counter with a slice from his arm blades in the midsection of the Cyclops, which Irish promptly dodged. They kept up this charade until finally, 06 was able to knock Irish to the ground.

"Finally, you fall." He pressed his massive foot onto the Cyclops's frame, pinning it to the ground. Irish tried everything he could; he moved every lever and pushed every button in an attempt to stand but failed each time. He needed 06 to remove some of the pressure off him if he had any chance of survival. "Now you d..." 06 stopped in midsentence and started clutching his head, screaming. This was the chance Irish needed. He pushed as hard as he could and forced 06 off of him. As 06 staggered back, Irish followed up his attack with throwing a chunk of the ground at 06. When the chunk hit ALPHA 06, he fell to the ground and started screaming for someone he called "Master". Irish pounced and, before 06 could block, drove one of his mechanised arms through his chest. He then followed it up by slamming his foot into 06's face. Then there was silence. Irish began to exit the Cyclops. When he was on the ground, he started towards the Central Control Console chamber before looking back at the Cyclops. Where 06's head had been was replaced by a puddle of dark blood and other bits.

"Aw, man that's nasty." He said before turning back towards the generator door. "Have to remember to tell Delta not to come back this way." He then entered the Central Control chamber to find Delta.

Crow hammered away at the terminal, inputting the station self destruct code. "This will go off just as the station enters the

atmosphere. Any later and the spores would be scattered, any sooner and you and Irish won't have enough time to get extracted." Crow explained to Delta.

"And you can create this portal to the Falling home world how?" Delta asked.

"That's my little secret." Crow chuckled. He raised the prism up and light started to emerge from it. Suddenly, it burst into a dazzling white light that blinded Delta's blast tint on his helmet, forcing him to look away. At the same time he heard thousands of screams inside his head, one of which was also outside the Central Control chamber. When his vision finally returned, Crow was already through the portal and it was starting to close. "Thank you for this chance Lieutenant. The dig site coordinates are under the ONI file named, "Operation Forerunner". By the time you get here, I'll have finished the cure."

"Wait, how will I get to the Falling home world?" Delta shouted. "I don't have the coordinates?"

"I'll send someone to give them to you at the dig site." Crow said as the portal was almost closed. "One more thing Lieutenant. Good luck. You'll need it." With that the portal closed. Delta turned to leave when Irish burst through the door.

"You okay?" He asked.

"Yeah, why wouldn't I be?"

"Because you were taking your good sweet time! I could have used your help back there." Irish complained.

"Oh, sorry about that. Well. I'm all done here, let's get back to the landing pad." Delta said as he started walking towards the door.

"Uh, isn't there a quicker way to get to the extraction point than the way we came?" Irish asked before Delta could leave.

"No, if we want to get to the Evac site on time, we have to go this way, or else we will end up running into some Falling which will slow us down." He continued to walk towards the door until Irish grabbed his arm.

"Okay, look. It's a bit "messy" out there. Isn't there another way we can go to get past it?" Irish admitted. Puzzled, Delta took a look outside and swung his head back in a second later.

"I see what you mean." Delta replied, trying not to throw up. "I guess we could take the ventilation shaft up there back to the route to the landing pad, but we have to hurry."

"Cool, but where is...it..." Irish trailed off as he looked up towards the top of the Chamber. Right next to the Super Computer was a tiny vent cover. "Is that are only option?"

"Yeah, I know what you mean. Miss that and we'll have one heck of a drop waiting for us."

"But why does it have to be so high?"

"Well, it's either that or..." he pointed outside the door, "that."

"Let's play it safe and," Irish stopped to compose himself, "run past my mess. Agreed?"

"Yeah, let's do it on the count of three." Delta said. They braced themselves. "THREE!" They both sprinted out of the door, eyes closed as they ran passed 06's corpse. After about a minute or so, they opened their eyes and slowed down.

"That wasn't so bad." Irish said.

"Easy for you to say." Delta told him. "I think I stepped in him. Look." He showed Irish the underside of his boot.

"Ew, now that's nasty. When we get back to the vent, let me go first."

"Why?"

"I don't want to have to look at that all the way back to the landing pad." They both laughed but stopped when the ground started to shake. They looked behind them and saw hundreds, if not thousands, of Falling running at them.

"Aw, come on!" Irish complained as he and Delta were forced to run again. "Can't we have a few moments rest?"

"Well, as the saying goes, "No rest for the wicked." Besides, there's a vent just up ahead." Delta said, pointing the vent out as they ran. It was closed over, so both Delta and Irish drew their pistols and fired at it until it opened. When they reached it, Delta gave Irish a foot up so that he could reach it. Once he was safely inside, Delta jumped but wasn't high enough to grab a hold on the vent. Luckily, Irish caught him as he was falling and pulled him up, just as the Falling raced under them.

"That's strange." Irish said. "They're not after us."

"Yeah, wonder why?" Delta responded. "Well, let's not wait here for them to change their minds. We have a ride to catch." And with that they began their journey back to the landing pad.

"Delta! I thought I said let me go first!" Irish screamed.

19. Chapter 19

****ODST RED ALERT****

****Part 19****

After switching places further on down the vent shaft, Irish and Delta arrived at where they had entered the vent to get to the Central Control Chamber. Irish was the first to drop down. He looked around as Delta lowered himself to the ground. No-one insight for as far as he could see.

"All clear?" Delta asked.

"Yeah, which is strange seeing as most of the Falling we heard passing under us should be around here somewhere."

"Well, if they're around the next corner, guess it was a good idea to switch to helmet comms when I let you in front of me." Delta chuckled as Irish turned to him.

"Dude, no offence, but every time you say something like that, it normally turns out to be true." Irish replied in a serious tone. "What if they ARE around the corner? There's no way we can handle all of them AND get to the landing pad on time."

"Hmmm. Good point." Delta said. He then started towards the corner. "Why don't we go check?" He tapped his helmet, switching to loudspeaker and shouted, "HAY, YOU FALLING SCUM BAGS! YOU READY TO D..." He was cut short by Irish tackling him to the ground.

"YOU IDIOT! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?" He shouted at Delta before he realised Delta was laughing. He turned to see how many Falling he had alerted. Strangely, there was nothing there.

"Oh, I got you good that time." Delta said in between his laughter. He began to stand up. "Do you think I would really be stupid enough to say that if there were Falling there?"

"Well, how was I to know?" Irish said, breathing a sigh of relief. "Wait a minute. How did YOU know that they weren't around the corner?" This stopped Delta's laughter.

"Well, I'm not sure if this is a good thing, but...how can I put this. I can sense them, in a way. I don't know how to put it exactly but it's definitely got something to do with the Spores and the infection inside me."

"Well, it's a sure sign that you are infected but I think that we could use it to our advantage." Irish said as he pulled up the map of the station on both their HUDs. On it were two red dots. "We're here, the red dots, but the station can't track the Falling on this level, which means we'd have to tread carefully. If you can "sense" them, then we can hurry to the landing pad without fear of bumping into them."

"And seeing as we're already behind schedule, I guess it would come in handy."

"Well let's stop wasting time and get going." Irish said as he began to race towards the landing pad.

They ran for around twenty minutes before Delta sensed something. They slowed down and looked around for the Falling. They found them huddling against a wall.

"What are they doing?" Delta wondered. Soon the Falling started to move off.

"What was that about?" Irish asked.

"I don't know but we don't have time to find out. We're nearly there and our time is almost up."

They continued to run without any further encounters with and Falling until they arrived back at the door to the landing pad. Strangely, it was closed.

"We don't have time to open it fully." Delta said as he rushed towards the door controls. He input a command and a microphone appeared. "Priority override, RTY6. Engage emergency release." Delta said into the microphone. There was a loud click as the heavy locking mechanism was removed but the door remained closed.

"Delta, there's no way for us to open it manually." Irish said. "It weights a tone."

"If you were to push it during a power out. When the power is on, the door is as light as a feather." He said as he began to push, effortlessly. The door began to open, slowly but surely. Irish ran over to help him.

"This is a lot easier than the way we tried it before." Irish said to Delta. After the door was open enough for them to get through, they entered the landing pad. They looked around but there was no sign of a Pelican, or any other sort of transport that had come to get them. The ground started to shaking, as if something was getting closer. Something big...and it was coming from behind them. Irish and Delta turned to see thousands of Falling charging towards them. Delta and Irish ran to the door and began to close it. The door started to close, but again, it moved slowly.

"This can't be happening." Irish shouted. "This can't be happening."

"Hate to make matters worse Irish, but that's not just a few thousand Falling." Delta shouted in-between grunts. "That's all the Falling on the station!"

"WHAT!" Irish shouted. He started to push the door as hard as he could, even though it did him no good. The Falling were almost upon them. Suddenly, there was a flash of light in front of them. Because of the Falling stampeding up the corridor, they hadn't heard it coming. Their evac Pelican. Its main gun was pouring fire into the last part of the open doorway as Delta and Irish finished closing it. When there was only a little bit left, the station's main computer took over and sealed the door. Irish and Delta ran for the Pelican just as it landed. At the door to the Pelican stood Viper, Assrak, Thea, Hunter and Kiara.

"I can't believe it's over." Irish shout with joy. "We're nearly there, come on Delta. We can..." He stopped when he saw Delta kneeling on the ground, helmet off, hands against his head.

"Irish, run." He said, obviously in pain. "The Falling. They have..." He was cut short by all of the Falling screaming, which he soon joined.

"DELTA!" Irish shouted and began to run back to him.

"IRISH! GET ON THE PELICAN!" Delta screamed. "THE FALLING HAVE PUT

EXPLOSIVES AROUND THE STATION, RUN!" Then the ground started to rock violently and all of a sudden, an explosion rocked the station. The ground beneath their feet started to crumble away. Irish managed to reach the Pelican as it took off but Delta was swallowed up by the ground.

"DELTA!" Irish cried out. The Pelican started to slowly move out of the land pad and into space. Suddenly, the temperature shot up. They had entered the atmosphere.

"The stations going to blow any second now." The pilot shouted. "We have to go." The Pelican began to descend and accelerate away from the station, even against Irish's protests off going back for Delta.

"We can't leave him to die!" He shouted.

"If we go back for him, WE will die." The pilot protested.

"Look!" Assrak called out, pointing at a window above them. There were some shadows in it as well as flashes of light. Then an explosion destroyed the window sending something flying out. It was Delta, and he was coming directly towards them. He reached out his arms to grab the Pelican but was coming down too fast. He hit the Pelican with a bone curdling crunch. He was fighting for his life to try and stay on, and was losing. Irish jumped and grabbed Delta's arm just as Delta let go.

"I've got you." He reassured him. Then, Delta's hand started to slip.

"I'm sorry Irish." Delta said just before their hands disconnected. Luckily, Irish drove himself forward to grab him, while everyone else was holding on to Irish and started to pull them both up. They just got on board when the station erupted into a dazzling white light.

"It's over." Irish said. "It's finally over."

"Not quite." Delta said. He turned to Kiara and said, "Find me the ONI file on Operation Forerunner."

End
file.